

Vermilion

FLYCATCHER

January–March 2016 | Volume 61, Number 1



Engage

Engage Your Community in 2016!

The Fruits of Cross-Pollination

Circle Z Ranch

Gilded Flicker and Bridled Titmouse

Triple Header Birding in Sonora



**TUCSON
AUDUBON
SOCIETY**
conservation
education
recreation

Tucson Audubon promotes the protection and stewardship of southern Arizona's biological diversity through the study and enjoyment of birds and the places they live.

Tucson Audubon maintains offices, a library, nature centers, and nature shops, 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

Board Officers & Directors

President—Les Corey Secretary—Claire Zucker
Vice President—Bob Hernbrode Treasurer—John Kennedy

Directors at Large

Matt Bailey, Ardeh Barnhart, Gavin Bieber, Edward Curley, Kimberlyn Drew, Dave Dunford, Debra Finch, Jesus Garcia, Kathy Jacobs, John Kennedy, Cynthia Pruett, Mary Walker, Nancy Young Wright

Board Committees

Conservation Chair—Chris McVie
Finance—John Kennedy
Personnel—Debra Finch
Nominating & Governance—Dave Dunford

Programs & Activities

Field Trips—Kendall Kroesen
Library, Membership Meetings 629-0510 ext 0
Rare Bird Alert Andrew Core | Report Rare Birds 629-0510 ext 3

Staff (unless otherwise stated, dial 629-0510 plus extension)

Executive Director—Karen Fogas ext 7001
Interim Development Director and Coordinator: Paton Center
for Hummingbirds—Keith Ashley ext 7009
Accountant—Michelle Bourgeois ext 7003
Finance Director—Gillian Wettstein ext 7014
Membership & Development—Diana Rosenblum ext 7002
Volunteer Coordinator—Sharon Long ext 7011
Events Manager—Bété Jones ext 7012
Bird Conservation Biologist—Jennie MacFarland ext 7004
Bringing Birds Home Program Manager—Kendall Kroesen ext 7006
Conservation Director—Jonathan Horst 971-6238
Field Crew Supervisor—Rodd Lancaster 256-6909
Restoration Project Manager—Andy Bennett 262-1314
Digital Media & Bird Conservation—Matthew Griffiths 971-7924
Conservation Analyst—Matt Clark 307-0956
Marketing & Operations Director —Sara Pike ext 7008
Retail Coordinator—Sarah Whelan ext 7007
Operations & Retail Assistant—Kimberly Matsushino ext 7017

Tucson Audubon Nature Shops

300 E University Blvd #120 ext 7015
Hours: 10 AM-4 PM, Mon-Sat
Agua Caliente Park, 12325 E Roger Rd 760-7881
Hours: 10 AM-1:30 PM, Thu-Sat Please call to confirm hours.
Shop opens earlier and closes later during certain months.
Nature Shop space generously provided by Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation.

Tucson Audubon Nature Centers

Mason Center
3835 W Hardy Rd, Tucson, AZ 85742
Open most weekdays 9 AM-5 PM or when chain is down.
Paton Center for Hummingbirds
477 Pennsylvania Ave, Patagonia, AZ 85624

Vermilion Flycatcher is published quarterly. For address changes or subscription issues call 629-0510. Submissions are due the 1st of the month, one month before issue date. Send submissions as Microsoft Word, RTF, or plain text files to Matt Griffiths at mgriffiths@tucsonaudubon.org.

Coordinator—Matt Griffiths 971-7924

Proofreaders—Tucson Audubon staff and volunteers

Design / Layout—Melina Lew

© 2015 Tucson Audubon Society

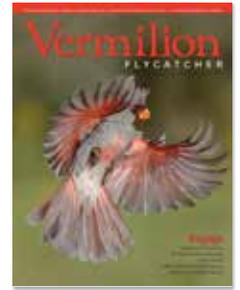
CCL in photo credits—creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0
All photos © the photographer.

FEATURES

- 8 Paton Center for Hummingbirds: Wally & Marion Paton
- 9 Botany for Better Birding: Thrashers
- 10 How Our Regional Specialty Birds Fit into the World of Birding—Gilded Flicker and Bridled Titmouse
- 11 Triple Header Birding in Sonora
- 12 Engage Your Community in 2016!
- 14 The Fruits of Cross-Pollination: Reflecting on a Year of Collaborative Work
- 15 Tucson Meet Your Birds at Sweetwater Wetlands
- 16 Circle Z Ranch

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 Events and Classes
- 4 Events Calendar
- 5 News Roundup
- 7 Volunteer Spotlight
- 18 Conservation and Education News
- 19 Conservation Corner
- 20 Wildlife Garden Plant Profile
- 22 Field Trips
- 23 Birding Travel from Our Business Partners
- 23 Birds & Business Alliance
- 24 Tucson Audubon Nature Shops
- 25 Book Review



FRONT COVER: Pyrrhuloxia by Alan Murphy. View more of Alan's work at alanmurphyphotography.com.

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

EcoPartnership: Cross-Pollinating for a Restorative Future

Luis Perales

One of the keys to a healthy ecosystem is the biodiversity that exists within that system. Diverse species working in balance with one another help to increase their viability and to mitigate potential threats. This state of ecological equilibrium is found in many natural spaces, but is very much lacking in the urban core. Our historical practice of sacrificing the natural environment for a more “orderly” and “controlled” environment is the new normal.

But rather than dwell on that, let's turn our attention, for a moment, to hopeful opportunities. Let's take a lesson from the natural world and allow ourselves to experiment with cross-pollination and diversity. That's the premise behind a strategic partnership between Changemaker High School (CMHS) and Tucson Audubon Society. Over the past year, our organizations have engaged each other to build a new type of collaboration that embodies the statement: *Where Birds Thrive, People Prosper*.



Our collective work has launched a school-based restorative ecology program that lives in the newly developed CMHS Restorative Ecology Lab. The work that has come out of this lab is nothing short of amazing. It includes:

- Construction of nest boxes for urban birds of prey
- GIS mapping of local tree canopy
- Field study for students in Patagonia
- Capacity & restoration skill building for students and staff
- Restoring bird habitat space in the urban core
- Developing a seed-to-shade native plant program
- Student presentations at conferences

These outcomes speak for themselves and have demonstrated the potential for EcoPartnerships that create win-win results. Our hope is that this partnership, and others like it, will be further encouraged and that we take more time to continue to learn from the lessons that the natural world has to teach us. ■

The Year of Engagement

Karen Fogas, Executive Director

Let's face it. Time is running out for the things we care about. That's why in 2016, Tucson Audubon Society is reaching out. Call it the Year of Engagement.

If we operate business as usual, we are going to get the same result—we will continue to lose invaluable, irreplaceable ground. We can no longer afford to talk predominantly to those with whom we see things in the same or similar ways. If we don't get people to care, we lose. We need a lot more people to care more about the environment. A lot more. Enough to get the attention of politicians who use people's fear and differences—including their fear of differences—to maintain the status quo that allows special interests to deplete our resources and stand in the way of changes we must make.

This week, I was talking with a woman who described her relationship with birds as "every time I see a bird, I fall in love." While I might not have used exactly the same language, it occurred to me that she was

describing what birds are to me too. Don't get me wrong, the science of birds is incredibly interesting. Why they do what they do, when they do it, how they do it, it's even intriguing that we can't fully answer these questions. However, there are lots of things in this world that I am intellectually curious about which don't move me—things that don't make me fall in love when I see them.

We're fortunate. Our "tool" to reach people (which we also happen to love) is birds. Beautiful, intriguing, elusive, charming, fascinating-to-watch, feed-the-soul birds.

But we have to figure out how to get people to pause long enough to feel those emotions. We have to create opportunities for them to feel, with the heart, what we love, so that they will grow to love it too. We will have to be creative in our outreach, persistent in our efforts, unflagging in our determination and persuasive in our story. We will have to engage. In every possible way.

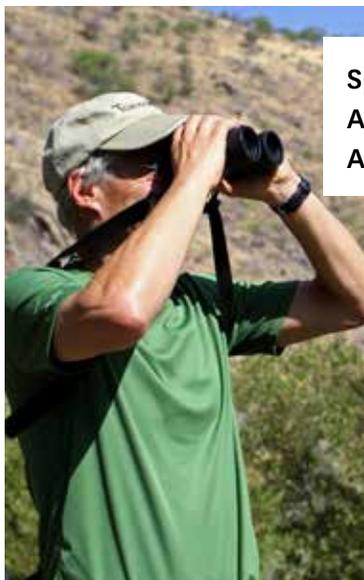
So this year we are making a concerted effort to engage "everyone" on behalf of birds and their habitat. Members, volunteers, conservation partners, advocacy partners, millennials, boomers, families, retirees, students, donors, media, people of all backgrounds and people with preferences different from our own. We at Tucson Audubon Society have a wide array of activities to offer, from providing a young person's first joyful experience at being outside the city viewing birds to transforming landscapes to assisting donors in funding what they care about. Education, Conservation, Recreation and Advocacy. This year, I'd like us to conduct every activity with a focused purpose—to engage as many people as we can in the work that is so important.

Let's challenge ourselves. Let's put all our energy into engaging people so they will experience the awe of nature, through birds. For what we love, we protect. ■



TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY BIRDING for the BIRDS

BIRDATHON 2016 | APRIL 8–MAY 8



Sporting birders spotting birds in support of Tucson Audubon... that's the essence of **Birdathon**, a southeast Arizona tradition since 1987.

What is Birdathon and how do I participate?

- Like a walk-a-thon, but instead of walking, go birding and gather pledges per species seen!
- Fun for everyone—kids, adults, beginners, and experts!
- Hold your Birdathon any time from April 8–May 8; your day can last from 1 hour to 24
- Join a team or lead one! Gather a group of friends and go find birds for a fun, different activity
- Prizes will be awarded for a variety of categories including: a grand prize, most species seen, most funds raised, and youngest birder
- Stay tuned for details and fundraising tips in our weekly emails and on our website: tucsonaudubon.org/birdathon



L: Scott Olmstead; Above: Hooded Oriole, John Hoffman

**MOST FUN
FUNDRAISER
OF THE YEAR!**

TUCSON AUDUBON EVENTS AND CLASSES

Live and Learn with Tucson Audubon!

TUCSON AUDUBON BIRD EDUCATION PROGRAM

Become a birder or improve your birding skills through a suite of courses offered at Tucson Audubon. Our courses are designed to take you through a natural progression from a beginning to an intermediate/advanced birder, transporting you to some of the most beautiful locations throughout our region along the way. Below, you will find our courses listed by birding level.

Become a Tucson Audubon Society member and save!



Backyard birding



Birding by Ear, Curve-billed Thrasher, Joan Geilaty



Ash-throated Flycatcher with insect, Lois Manowitz

BEGINNER

BACKYARD BIRDING AND BEYOND

Saturdays, February 6–March 5;
Classroom 10:00 am–12:00 pm;
Field trips TBD,
\$185/ \$150 member discount

Learn why southeastern Arizona is such a great place for birds and why bird watching is so much darn fun! Taught by **Lynn Hassler**, this course is designed for beginners and will address how to separate birds out by habitat, seasonal occurrence, and behavior. Learn about field marks and vocalizations and get the lowdown on binoculars and field guides, birding vocabulary, and etiquette in the field. Participants will learn how to identify local birds and discover some of their interesting characteristics and charms. We'll also cover some of the adaptations birds have developed in order to survive in our challenging environment.

WHY INSECTS MATTER IN YOUR BACKYARD: THE BIRD AND INSECT NEXUS

Saturday March 12, 2016, 9:00–11:00 am
Tucson Audubon's Mason Center
\$40

This spring National Audubon will launch a native plant initiative as part of its Bird Friendly Communities Program. At the same time, Tucson Audubon will launch its Backyard Habitat Recognition Program, part of its Bringing Birds Home Program about making backyard habitat for birds. Both efforts hinge to a large degree on the role of insects and other arthropods in biodiversity, pollination and as food for birds. According to an influential book, Douglas Tallamy's *Bringing Nature Home*, 96% of terrestrial North American birds depend on insects to feed their young. Come explore what this means for our own yards in this presentation and outdoor workshop. Taught by Kendall Kroesen.

ADVANCED BEGINNER/ INTERMEDIATE

BIRD ID: SHARPENING YOUR IDENTIFICATION SKILLS

March 24, 26, & 31, April 2:
Thursday classes, 5:30–8:30 pm;
Saturday all-day field trips TBD,
\$185/ \$150 member discount

A perfect follow-up to Lynn Hassler's Backyard Birding and Beyond, this workshop will expand upon basic skills for identifying birds. You will become better at identification by learning important terminology; recognizing size, shape, and structure; and understanding plumage, patterns, and colors. The details of identification are discussed with a "big picture" perspective. Taught by **Homer Hansen**, the workshop will have two one-day field trips to practice the techniques learned in the classroom.

INTERMEDIATE

All workshops taught by **Homer Hansen** at the Tucson Audubon Main Office unless otherwise specified. Thursday's classes are from 5:30–8:30 pm and Saturday field trips are TBD. \$145/\$110 member discount

RAPTORS SPECIALTY WORKSHOP

February 11 & 13, 2016

BIRDING BY EAR

April 7 & 9, 2016

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

See tucsonaudubon.org/education or contact Sharon Long at slong@tucsonaudubon.org or call 520-629-0510 x7011

TUCSON AUDUBON'S 8th ANNUAL GALA

An Evening for the Birds

Protecting Places for People and Wildlife

Saluting Saguaro National Park and the National Park Service Centennial

Tuesday, February 9th, 2016 · Hilton El Conquistador Resort

This Fabulous Evening will Feature: No-host Bar and Appetizers · Live Birds · Interpretive Displays · Mystery Wine Raffle "Getaways" Themed Silent Auction · Gourmet Buffet Dinner

Keynote Speaker Nancy Laney, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Western National Parks Association, will celebrate Saguaro National Park in her presentation, The Evolution of a Desert City: The Importance of Saguaro National Park to Tucson's Past, Present and Future. We will also hear from Darla Sidles, Superintendent of Saguaro National Park, as we celebrate the National Park Service Centennial.

tucsonaudubon.org/gala

OUR SPONSORS

Barn Owl

Marty and Mickey Baumrind
Circle Z Ranch

Greater Roadrunner

Western National Parks Association

Anna's Hummingbird

Vicki and Jim Click
Sandy and Karl Elers
Debra Finch
Kimberlyn Drew and Andy Moore

Cynthia Pruett
Ed Curley

Chris and Doug McVie

Hooded Oriole

Diet of Hope Institute
Financial Architects



American Birding Association Birding Rally: Sierra Vista, Arizona

Perhaps the hottest corner of the ABA Area for a staggering array of showy, specialty birds, southeast Arizona in August is a birder's paradise. This rally is backed right up against Tucson Audubon's Southeast Arizona Birding Festival so that you can enjoy both events back to back.

AUGUST 15-20, 2016

Hosts: Richard Fray, Jennie Duberstein, Homer Hansen, Jeff & Liz Gordon, George Armistead and more. Limit: 64 people

For info email: events@aba.org



Montezuma Quail, John Hoffman



Southeast Arizona BIRDING FESTIVAL

August 11-14, 2016

Registration opens: March 15, 2016

Tucson, Arizona

(Based out of the Arizona Riverpark Inn)



Expert-Led Field Trips, Workshops, Nature Expo, Evening Programs

Keynote Speaker: Jeff Gordon, President, American Birding Association

Featured Speaker: Sheri Williamson, Director, Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory

FOR DETAILS AND REGISTRATION, VISIT TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/FESTIVAL

Formerly the Tucson Bird and Wildlife Festival

Clockwise from top: Lucifer Hummingbird, John Hoffman; Vermilion Flycatcher, Jeremy Hayes; Elegant Trogon, Lois Manowitz; Gilded Flicker, Bruce Taubert



Saguaro National Park, Joe Parks

Living with Nature Monthly Program

Join us for our free monthly program! These public presentations seek to inform, educate, and entertain. We invite speakers who are experts in their fields to present on a variety of topics related to birds including their biology and ecology; global, regional, and local birding hot spots; and conservation issues that affect birds, other wildlife, and their habitats. This season in Tucson we will have a social gathering from 6:00–6:30 pm, followed by Tucson Audubon news, rare bird alerts and our featured speaker. We've also added a new northwest venue in Oro Valley at the Western National Park Association.

TUCSON

All lectures will be held in the Amethyst Room of Pima Community College Downtown Campus, 1255 N. Stone Ave. Lectures are scheduled on **Mondays at 6:00 pm** October through May.

January 11

Gray Hawk Study along the San Pedro River Valley

Gray Hawks have been expanding their range in southeastern Arizona since the turn of the century, following ecological changes along the San Pedro River. Ariana La Porte studies Gray Hawks in three different habitats and compares their prey selection and nesting success.

March 21

Roadrunner Family

Roadrunners are one of the icons of the Southwest. We often see them dashing about, yet few people have the opportunity to observe these birds nesting or raising a family. Through photographs and video, Doris Evans follows a pair of Greater Roadrunners as they build their nest, incubate their eggs, and successfully raise and fledge five chicks.

GREEN VALLEY

All lectures will be held at Green Valley Recreation's Desert Hills Social Center, 2980 S. Camino Del Sol. Lectures are scheduled for the **first Saturday of the month at 10:00 am** from November to April.

January 9

Sky Island Birds

The Sky Islands of southeastern Arizona are endowed with a diversity of bird species unparalleled anywhere north of Mexico. Here, diverse topography and the associated plethora of habitats create a unique assemblage of birds. Join bird guide, naturalist, and wildlife biologist Vincent Pinto for a fun and informative introduction to a broad cross-section of Sky Island birds.

February 6

Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys

Jennie MacFarland, Tucson Audubon Important Bird Area (IBA) Conservation Biologist, will talk about the recent Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys in Coronado National Forest. This bird has recently been listed as a threatened species and these surveys offer new and critical information on this secretive bird in a previously unknown habitat type.

January 6: Citizen Advocacy Workshop (Tucson)

January 9: Living With Nature (Green Valley)

January 11: Living With Nature (Tucson)

January 23: 7 Saturdays in Patagonia

January 23: Living With Nature (Oro Valley)

January 23: Bill Williams NWR Important Bird Area Dedication

February 6: Living With Nature (Green Valley)

February 9: Tucson Audubon's 8th Annual Gala

February 9: Environment Day—Water is Life: Creating a Conservation Vision of Arizona's Water Future (Phoenix)

February 13: Tucson Meet Your Birds at Sweetwater Wetlands

February 27: 7 Saturdays in Patagonia

March 5: Living With Nature (Green Valley)

March 12 & 13: Tucson Audubon at Tucson Festival of Books

March 14: Living With Nature (Tucson)

March 19: 7 Saturdays in Patagonia

March 19: Living With Nature (Oro Valley)

March 21: Living With Nature (Tucson)

March 5

Birds of Madera Canyon

Doug Moore is a docent naturalist who has been leading educational tours in Madera Canyon since 1993. He created the Friends of Madera Canyon's award-winning teaching manual *Madera Canyon: Web of Life* and wrote the natural history book *The Nature of Madera Canyon*. Currently, he is the Education Director of the Friends of Madera Canyon.

NEW ORO VALLEY VENUE!

Western National Park Association

10:00–11:00 am

12880 N Vistoso Village Dr, Oro Valley, 85755

January 23

Bird Conservation in our National Parks

Join Natasha Kline, wildlife biologist for Saguaro National Park, as she presents an informative talk about the ecology and conservation of threatened and endangered species in our National Forests. You will learn about birds, birding opportunities, and citizen science in Saguaro National Park and other southern Arizona Parklands.

Arizona Important Bird Areas: Another Great Year Ahead

Jennie MacFarland, *Bird Conservation Biologist*

This past year was a tremendously busy and rewarding time for the Important Bird Areas program. Together, over 50 currently active volunteers and Tucson Audubon staff pulled off the most ambitious survey project we had ever attempted. We searched for Yellow-billed Cuckoos in eight Sky Islands and conducted 1,515 five-minute point count surveys—and that was only in July and August. The field work for this citizen science program follows the wheel of time that the birds themselves follow. Winter is when we count grassland sparrows, especially Chestnut-collared Longspurs that spend the coldest months feasting on the seeds of our native grasses. In the spring, we search for Elf Owls and Gilded Flickers since this is when they are most noticeable in the Tucson area. Early summer is when we seek out the lovely and elusive Elegant Trogons in five Sky Islands in southeast Arizona. There is always something exciting on the horizon for this program—so what do we have in store for 2016?



Bendire's Thrasher, Lois Manowitz

Some of what occurs in this program can be a bit unpredictable; for example, I had no idea at the beginning of 2015 that we would be doing an extensive Yellow-billed Cuckoo project. While it is best to expect the unexpected, there are many already-planned

projects on the horizon that we can get excited about now. Between the regular grassland sparrow surveys and the addition of Bendire's Thrashers surveys, this will be a busier winter than normal. Not all the details for these thrasher point counts in the Tucson area have been completely locked down, but they will be happening in February and are aimed at helping the US Fish and Wildlife Service figure out the habitat needs of this enigmatic species.

Spring is a busy time for birds, birders, and our survey program. There are two areas near Tucson that will be proposed as new Important Bird Areas this year, so we may need to search a bit more for specialty

species such as Gilded Flicker and Elf Owl again this spring. Early summer brings us around to Elegant Trogons again, with the regular five Sky Islands being surveyed during the last three weekends in May. This year, though, we are adding another mountain range in June: the Galiuro Mountains northeast of Tucson. In 2015, a professional surveyor searching for Mexican Spotted Owls heard Elegant Trogons calling in several canyons. This exciting discovery will lead us to survey in this range for the first time ever!



Installing nest box, Jim Dolph



Galiuro Mountains, Mad Jag

Our program will also shift its focus to monitoring and enhancing existing Important Bird Areas. For example, Western "Azure" Bluebirds are one of the main bird species that made the Patagonia Mountains into an IBA, so we will be partnering with local land owners and installing nest boxes for these beautiful birds with the hope of increasing their numbers and helping them expand into suitable neighboring habitats.

2016 will also be a year to celebrate all that we have accomplished so far. **The 75th anniversary party for the Bill Williams River NWR will be held on Saturday, January 23rd.** This refuge is a Global Important Bird Area for Black Rail and Bell's Vireo and an important remaining riparian habitat on the Colorado River. You are all cordially invited to attend this event where this Global Important Bird Area will be dedicated and celebrated!

Even without knowing all that is to come, 2016 is shaping up to be as fun and busy as last year. That's just how we like it over here in the IBA offices at Tucson Audubon! If you are interested in helping with the IBA program with volunteer bird surveying, data entry, outreach, or marketing, please email volunteer@tucsonaudubon.org. 📧

Spring Birding in May at Q Ranch

Located high in a ponderosa pine and oak-dotted valley, Q Ranch has some fine birding in the spring. Make this your birding getaway for migration in May of 2016!

From Friday, May 13th to Sunday, May 15th, the trip will include two nights at the Ranch. All meals are included beginning with dinner on Friday. This is a great time of year for birds: over 150 species have been sighted around the ranch. In addition to birds, there are archeological ruins dating from 900 to 1400 AD, and spring wildflowers abound. Gather outside at night for dark skies and magnificent views of the Milky Way. Eat gourmet meals and learn about local history. The trip leader will be Lynn Hassler, educator, author, birder, and botanist.

Interest piqued? Sign up! Carpooling will be arranged for the trip. Space is limited. Doubles \$310, singles \$440 (all inclusive). For more information and to sign up, see tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips. 📧

Don Radovich Art Exhibit Benefits Tucson Audubon

“A SENSE OF NATURE”

January 7–February 3, 2016

Ranch House Art Gallery, Agua Caliente Park, 12325 E. Roger Road

Gallery hours Wednesday–Sunday, 10 am–3 pm

Public reception on January 9, 11 am–1 pm

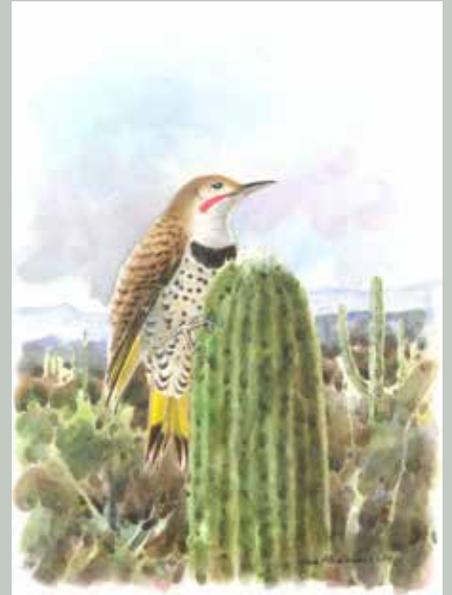


Townsend's Warbler, Don Radovich

Painter and Tucson Audubon member Don Radovich says the goal of his work is to inspire a sense of place and stewardship in our natural world. His art has appeared in a variety of galleries and shows, including National Wildlife in Washington D.C. and Game Coin International. His illustrations appear in books such as *Birds of the West Indies* and *Reader's Digest Birds of North America*. Don holds an M.A. degree from the University of New Mexico with graduate

studies at the Art Institute in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. He taught painting at Western State Colorado University for over twenty years.

Twenty-five percent of the proceeds of this show will go to Tucson Audubon.



Gilded Flicker, Don Radovich

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Joann Alexander & Tim Tilton, Marla Backman, Marilyn & Ralph Barnhart, Kristen Bauer, Barbara Beal, Julia Bonser, Nancy Britos, Jesse Britten, Don Butler, Marjorie Murphey-Camacho & Vaughn Camacho, Betty Camus, Cindy Carlson & Greg Ziebell, Wm. Cebula, Natasha Kline & Martin Collins, Judy Cools, Shirley Coombs, Gail Coray, J. Cunningham, Raul Delgado, Jeanine Derby & Paul Shaw, Donna Diggons, Sally Dodds, Fred Drink, Lois & Rick Eisenstein, Patricia Ellis, Nancy Eswein, Daphne & G. Michael Evans, Sara Hammond & David Fales, Leigh & Roy Farrell, Dianne Fields, Sharon Foltz, Carolyn Fowler, Anne Fox, Bonny Galloway, Bonny Gold Forkner, Jennifer Gross, Dita Hagen, Anna Halula, Carol & Ed Hausafus, Ami Havens & Sherman Bodner, Christine Henderson, Susan Hetherington, Dominika Heusinkveld, Sandra Hicks, Allison Hlushko, Mary Hoover & Vaughn Smith, Judi & Nick Huige, Mary Delfs & Charles Hunter, Robin Kaminsky, Doug Klassen, Peter Klinger, Bradley Konecnik, Carol & Paul Lamberger, Joyce Lambert, Julie & Eric Lauterbach-Colby, Janice Lemon-Ludwick, Connie Lewis, Mr. & Mrs. Love, Susan Malynn, Kim & Kerry Martin, Shireley Martin, Kim Matsushino, Janet McCloud, Beth McCullough, Linda McMullen & Farwell Smith, Linda & Richard Monstur, Mickey & Doug Nail, Aletris Neils, Becky Newcombe, Sandy Northcutt, Bonnie & Jim Olson, Bob Perata, Kay Pinckard-Hansen & Ronald Hansen, Lawrence Pritika, Betts Putnam-Hidalgo, Fahmeeda & Jamal Qadri, Sande Rego-Ross, Richard Rocco, Barbara Rydall, Jan Saunders, Maribeth Slebodrik, Ellen Snyderman, Mike Sos, Kathleen Stocker, Mary & Chris Strohm, Sarah Tarver-Wahlquist, Rick Taylor, Janice Pittscey & Cliff Tucker, Katherine Verbeke, Georgette Vikingstad Valle, Kathleen & Paul Volpe, Elaine Wallace, Howard Ward, Ellen & George West, William West, Ken Wilson, Tim Worth, Howard Youngs, Sherry Ziegler

THANK YOU TO OUR FREQUENT FLYERS

Nick Allison, Ardeth Barnhart, Melanie Builder, Shawn Burke, Karen Chandler, Janet Cohn, Mich Coker, Christine Curtis, Sandy Elers, Peggy Ford, Marlesa Gray, John Kennedy, Robert King, Susan Kozacek, Suzanne Long, Marcia Obara, Erin Olmstead, Deb Vath, Frances Ann Walker, 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/give.

GIFTS IN HONOR/MEMORY

In honor of Canny Clark from an anonymous donor

In memory of Jane Church from Nancy Cook

In honor of Sally & Jim Lockwood from Linda Craig and family

In honor of Leigh Creighton from Phil Creighton

In honor/memory of William Raffone from Frances & Bill Raffone

In honor of Julie Gordon from Margherita Gale Harris and the Windibrow Foundation

MEET LOIS MANOWITZ!

If you are a long-time reader of Tucson Audubon's *Vermilion Flycatcher*, you have certainly seen beautiful photographs by Lois Manowitz.

Lois began her interest in bird photography 25 years ago in New Jersey, when a hummingbird feeder brought her close to Ruby-throated Hummingbirds. She enjoyed photographing these little jewels for a few years, but when a neighbor put up some Eastern Bluebird nest boxes, Lois took notice of the beautiful visitors and turned to documenting their nesting efforts through her photographs.

When Lois moved to Tucson ten years ago, she found a group of other bird photographers and started submitting her work to the local newspaper. From this group, she met other Tucson Audubon volunteers who encouraged her to offer her beautiful shots to us. Tucson Audubon is the fortunate recipient of many of her eye-catching photos.

Lois was part of the initial Azure Bluebird count that led to the Tucson Audubon Azure Bluebird nest box program in cooperation with Arizona vineyards. The Azure Bluebird is a rare, regional subspecies of the Eastern Bluebird, and since the Eastern Bluebird in New Jersey

Lois Manowitz



was one of the beautiful birds that sparked her interest in bird photography so many years ago, Lois was very excited to find an Eastern Bluebird population here in Arizona! Tucson Audubon often uses her striking photographs of Azure Bluebirds in our publications.

When asked what her favorite photograph is, Lois replied, "Probably the Red-faced Warbler shot from Marshall Gulch in Summerhaven.

I spent a long hour standing still while he darted around near the ground, gleaning insects. It finally got used to my presence and calmed down, giving me some really nice shots."

Lois feels she is making a contribution to Tucson Audubon and conservation with her photographs. We agree and look forward to many more in the future!



Clockwise from top left, all photos by Lois Manowitz: Curve-billed Thrasher, Red-faced Warbler, Azure Bluebird, Wilson's Warbler, Gambel's Quail, Broad-billed Hummingbird

WELCOME NEW VOLUNTEERS!

Matt Batten
Bridget Dale
Mary Graf
Kathleen Heitzmann
Felicia Menten
Amy Rosenblum
Keith Shallcross
Hyatt Simpson
Lorraine St. Germain

To our volunteers,

Looking back on my first year as Volunteer Coordinator for Tucson Audubon, I am amazed. It seems impossible that a short year ago I didn't know most of you! I have forged connections and made friends. I am humbled by your quickness in responding to a volunteer need and the amount of work you accomplish. The staff of Tucson Audubon truly means it when we say, "We could not do it without you!" I am so pleased to work with you and I look forward to a new year of important conservation work with the remarkable volunteers of Tucson Audubon.

—Sharon Long

Volunteer Opportunities

Do you love hiking and working with kids? Trekking Rattlers is looking for you to help us co-lead educational hikes for middle school students in some wonderful places in southeast Arizona. To learn more, contact Sharon Long at slong@tucsonaudubon.org.

Contact Sharon about volunteering!

volunteer@tucsonaudubon.org
520-209-1811
tucsonaudubon.org/volunteer

It's a rare couple who open their backyard to strangers in search of rare birds

Keith Ashley, Coordinator: Paton Center for Hummingbirds

Wally and Marion Paton provided tens of thousands of people with access to southeast Arizona's bounty of beautiful birds. To celebrate their legacy Tucson Audubon has created a sign that shares their inspiring story (excerpted below). The sign was created in collaboration with the Patons' daughter, Bonnie Paton Moon, and Patagonia artist Greg Whitcoe (gwhitcoedesigns.com). The sign creation and production were funded entirely by ArtPlace America (artplaceamerica.org).

Wally and Marion grew up on small New England farms during the Great Depression. Marion told stories of making clothing from grain sacks and Wally recalled rising at 3:00 am to milk the neighbors' cows before catching his morning school bus. Shortly after they met, the attack on Pearl Harbor separated them. During the war, Wally flew 31 bombing missions in "The Knock-out Dropper," his B-17, recording each mission on the back of his sweetheart Marion's picture. They were married in August of 1944.

For the next eighteen years Wally and Marion operated a small dairy farm with milk cows, chickens, rabbits, sheep, pigs, a collie named Brigadoon—and four children: Wallace Jr., Bonnie, George and Jackie. When industrial development—and the spread of the Boston suburbs—brought an end to their farming, Wally went to work as a machinist for Microwave Development Labs where he managed the operations of precision castings for guided missile systems and the Lunar Space Module. In 1974 his career brought him to Nogales, Sonora, Mexico, where he opened and managed a plant. This was the birth of the Patons' home in Patagonia, Arizona. 🇺🇸



Wally Paton & Marion Garfield, 1944

When my parents moved into the house at 477 Pennsylvania Ave. in the early 70s, there was little growing in the yard. As Dad tells it 'there was an old junk sitting over there with some ivy growing in it and that's about the only thing that was growing around here.'



Birders under the canopy

Avid gardeners, they set out to change this barren landscape. Dad bought a rototiller and dug up large areas of the backyard for a vegetable garden. He planted pecan trees and a mini orchard of fruit trees in the front yard. Mom planted flowers and bushes, especially rose bushes. As my Mom noted, 'the more I planted, the more hummingbirds came.' Birds flying down the Sonoita Creek in search of food changed their flight path to check out this new oasis that my parents had created. And they came by the hundreds. Shortly, birders followed.

While others were erecting fences and hedges to afford their space privacy, my parents were opening their gate and welcoming anyone in to sit in their backyard for as long as they wanted. Our home became "home" to thousands. Feeding the birds was a constant not unlike the feeding and milking of cows of

our New England farming days. Sometimes I would awaken to the whispers of birders passing my bedroom window, excited to be there, yet always respectful of the family's privacy. I loved looking through the guestbook pages to see who had been visiting and from what corner of the globe they had traveled to get to this tiny piece of birding paradise.

It was all magical, a sanctuary for sure.

—Bonnie Paton Moon, daughter of Wally and Marion Paton

Thrashers Rich Hoyer

We are lucky to have four thrashers in the genus *Toxostoma* resident right here in Arizona—Le Conte’s, Crissal, Curve-billed, and Bendire’s—and knowing their habitat is crucial to finding and identifying them. Thrashers are skulking, ground-loving birds that seek their food in soil and leaf litter with their amazing bills. Unknown in most countries, they are Arizona’s answer to earthcreepers, ground-jays, and chowchillas from other corners of the globe.

Understanding the habitat of the frustratingly similar Curve-billed and Bendire’s Thrashers means knowing chollas, mesquites, and grasses. If you’re local and up on your botany, you’re probably thinking “yawn, yawn, and yikes!” If you’re new to southern Arizona and don’t know our plants so well, you might be thinking, “what? huh? and yawn.” I’m hoping to address the latter group of people with this very simple botany lesson.



Since thrashers forage in the dirt, they seem to be less attached to particular plant species than many birds. This Crissal Thrasher is perched on a creosote bush. Rich Hoyer

Chollas are the tree-like, many-branched and jointed cacti that in some situations grow to 10 or more feet tall. We have several species here, known by names such as teddy bear, cane, staghorn, and chain-fruit. They’re related to the more familiar prickly pear cactus (and usually put in the same genus, *Opuntia*), but instead of flat pads,

the cholla segments are cylindrical with a round cross-section. Mesquite, on the other hand, is a woody shrub/tree in the pea family, meaning it’s related to acacias, mimosas, paloverdes, and ironwood, and worth getting to know for its wildlife value. The blackish bark is distinctive, becoming quite furrowed with age, and they leaf out only after the last frost (looking dead much of the winter). Mesquites bloom in late spring with long catkins of yellowish flowers. Grasses you need only recognize in a general sense.

While you should definitely study your field guide to learn the differences between Curve-billed and Bendire’s Thrasher, if you take any kind of desert scrub in any kind of terrain and add some large chollas, you will find Curve-billed Thrashers. We’re lucky that this species has adapted well to the urban environment of Tucson. These birds can be found in many back yards, alleys, and parks as long as there is some cholla present, for this is the plant they prefer to build their nest in.

Bendire’s Thrashers seem to be much pickier, and also seem to avoid Curve-billed Thrashers. In every location where I’ve found Bendire’s—and when you have a good location, you can expect to find them there all year long as well as year after year—there are no cholla and no Curve-bills. But there are always scattered grasses and mesquite of medium age, and the terrain is always flat with loose soil. Check out the habitat on Mile Wide and Reservation Roads in the Avra Valley west of Tucson to get a feel for this kind of habitat.

Crissal and Le Conte’s Thrashers require even less botanical savvy; in fact, with Crissal Thrasher, it seems the more you know about plants the less you will understand about its habitat preference. Consider three known hotspots for Crissal Thrasher: mid-elevations in the Santa Catalina Mountains such as Molino Basin; the start of the Anza Trail at Tumacacori; and, a bit out of our area, the southern end of the Salton Sea. Ranging in elevation from over 6000 feet to below sea level, with rocky slopes to flat, alluvial

Le Conte’s Thrasher, LoisManowitz



plains, these places have no plant species in common. Instead, this might be a lesson in the *shape* of a habitat that a bird cues in on, perhaps created by the size, shape, and density of the shrubs that live there, regardless of species.

Le Conte’s Thrasher, on the other hand, is like the Bendire’s in being picky. This bird appears to need flat ground and loose soil and prefer smaller, more scattered shrubs with minimal mesquite. If you can recognize saltbush (such as *Atriplex polycarpa*), which grows in exactly that kind of well-drained soil, you’ll often find Le Conte’s Thrasher together with it. The famous thrasher spot near Buckeye (at Baseline Road and Salome Highway) lacks cholla and therefore also lacks Curve-billed Thrashers, but the mosaic of mesquites and grasses, the density of mesquites and shrubs such as wolfberry (*Lycium spp.*), and the open sandy flats with saltbush make it a great place to get to know the three other species of *Toxostoma* in our area. ■

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

Gilded Flicker and Bridled Titmouse

Scott Olmstead

In this column, we look at some of our Southeast Arizona borderlands specialty bird species. Birders from all over the US travel to southeast Arizona to add birds to their life lists, and we are proud of the birds that make our region unique! But outside of the context of southeast Arizona, are these birds really a big deal? Here, we take a broader look at some of our iconic species and then poll a panel of international birding tour leaders to find out if these birds are really essential “ticks” from a world birding perspective. Remember, there are over 10,000 species of birds in the world! With fewer border rarities available in the winter, we’ll look at two regular residents in this edition.

Gilded Flicker (*Colaptes chrysoides*)

Everyone knows woodpeckers: a familiar, diverse, nearly worldwide bird family of over 200 species. (Real-life woodpeckers are absent from Antarctica and Australia, although their famous cartoon representations can still be found on TV there!) Woodpeckers are famous for digging, chiseling, drumming, and pounding with their bills, as well as for making their nests in cavities. These traits, like their zygodactylous feet (two toes forward and two toes backward), are shared among all woodpeckers! Southeast Arizona has seven resident woodpecker species, and I considered profiling the Arizona Woodpecker in this column—like the flicker, it’s a southeast Arizona specialty. So what sets the Gilded Flicker apart?



Gilded Flicker, WP Lynn

There are only six species of flickers in the genus *Colaptes*. (Another three South American species are sometimes included in *Colaptes* and sometimes split in the genus *Chrysoptilus*.) The flickers distinguish themselves from the other New World woodpeckers by their brightly colored flight feathers and their

habit of foraging on the ground. Gilded Flicker is the only woodpecker specialized to nest in cavities in large columnar cactuses—its distribution is closely tied to the extent of the Sonoran Desert and it is only common in intact stands of saguaro and cardón cactuses. This means it is an important indicator species of the desert. You can find this golden flash of feathers ranging as far north as the Phoenix area and as far south as northern Sinaloa and Baja California.

Bridled Titmouse (*Baeolophus ridgwayi*)

The adorable Bridled Titmouse is perhaps the most ornate American member of the Paridae family, which comprises of titmice and chickadees (also known as tits in Europe and Asia). Titmice and chickadees are omnivorous, capturing insects during warmer times, especially the nesting season, and living off seeds when insects are not available. They typically live in small family groups and prefer forest and woodland habitats. The Paridae have experienced greater speciation in the Old World, where there are over 50 species, compared to just 12 in the New World. Another difference between the hemispheres is that several “tits” in Asia sport more brightly-colored plumages, including yellow, rusty, green, and blue hues. Our titmice and chickadees, clad largely in variations of gray, black, brown, and white, are fairly dull by comparison.

Titmice and chickadees are a primarily temperate bird family, though the Bridled Titmouse, along with the Mexican Chickadee, ranges far into tropical latitudes. While it has the most restricted range in the US of all our Parids, its overall distribution is more extensive; it ranges from Arizona all the way to Oaxaca in southern Mexico. Next time you watch a flock of Bridled Titmice cavorting through the oaks and sycamores in Madera Canyon, imagine their cousins rubbing elbows with Gray Silky-Flycatchers and Rufous-capped Brushfinches in the mountains of Oaxaca.



Yellow-cheeked Titmouse, Keith Barnes/tropicalbirding.com

Our tour leader panel this time is made up of John Yerger of Borderland Tours along with Rich Hoyer and Gavin Bieber of Wings Birding Tours. By a 2-1 vote, they suggested that the Bridled Titmouse is not an essential tick in southeast Arizona

due to its fairly extensive range. But the Gilded Flicker, with its comparatively small range restricted to the Sonoran Desert, got a unanimous affirmative vote. It’s definitely a big-deal bird in a global context! ■

Scott Olmstead is a high school teacher here in Tucson, as well as a part-time tour leader for Tropical Birding Tours (tropicalbirding.com).

Triple Header Birding in Sonora Bob Bowers



Crested Caracara, Banámichi; Yellow-eyed Junco near Yècora; Tufted Flycatcher on the Mesa; La Mesa's botanic wonderland. All photos by Bob and Prudy Bowers

We've been to San Carlos, Mexico eighteen times in the last nine years, and almost all those visits took us through Hermosillo, the state capital of Sonora. We never stopped there, anxious to reach inviting birding destinations like San Carlos and Alamos. However, after noting increasing eBird reports from Hermosillo, we decided to explore some areas new to us. In October, we took a triangular loop that turned into a triple-header treat.



October flowers in Yècora

We started in Hermosillo, just 244 miles and four hours from Tucson. Sonora's capital is bigger than Tucson, lower in elevation, and hotter in summer. It might not look promising for birding, but surprisingly there are thirteen eBird hotspots there. The hottest of these hotspots is the Lagunas de Oxidaciòn, or sewage settlement ponds. Think Tucson's Sweetwater times a hundred: there are so many ponds, lakes, and canals here that you could easily spend more than a day birding them. We had to leave town after one night, so we limited ourselves to two morning hours, but still managed to find 54 species. Our guide was Carlos Gonzalez, a friendly young resident biologist, who is one of the top five Sonoran eBirders and eager to help visiting birders. Finding and birding the lagunas

is easy: drive west on Paseo Rio Sonora until it ends, then either turn left to pull over and bird the ponds on both sides of the road, or turn right, then left again onto a dirt road that leads to more lakes, ponds, and canals.

From Hermosillo, we turned south a short distance to Highway 16, where we turned east. Carretera 16 is the primary highway from Hermosillo to Chihuahua, but our destination was Yècora, 280 kilometers (174 miles) from Hermosillo. This incredibly scenic route starts in low-elevation agricultural valleys and climbs into the oak/pine forests of the Sierra Madre before descending into Yècora, a small town nestled in the foothills at 5,200 feet. Surrounded by vast fields of yellow flowers, Yècora in October is stunning. Accommodations are few and rustic, but cheap (we paid 400 pesos, about 24 dollars, at the King Motel). Restaurants are even fewer, but also cheap, and meals at El Meson de Lucy were delicious. The highway to Yècora covers a dozen eBird hotspots, from the Rio Matapè at San Jose de Pimas (105 species listed, including Green Kingfisher) to kilometer 286 east of Yècora. The Yècora hotspot lists 226 species, but many of those were found out of town at sites that subsequently became hotspots of their own. Our favorite is La Mesa el Campañero, a protected area just 9 miles west of Yècora. An access road requires high clearance for the first half-mile, but then turns to pavement and an easy dirt road for the next four plus miles. At nearly 7,000 feet, the Mesa is a forested botanic wonderland of oaks, pines, and colorful paper-barked trees. 124 species of birds are listed here, and during one afternoon we found mixed flocks of Mexican Chickadee, Olive Warbler, Arizona Woodpecker, Black-eared Bushtit, Yellow-eyed Junco, and Tufted Flycatcher. In all, the Yècora sites gave us 60 species over two days.

We've also long wanted to visit the Rio Sonora valley northeast of Hermosillo, but rather than return 175 miles to Hermosillo to go north and then east again, we took a shortcut across the mountains 30 miles west of Yècora. The first 18 miles of this shortcut took two hours, thanks to cratered potholes and landslides, but fortunately the remaining 177 miles to Banámichi were much easier. On the Rio Sonora, Banámichi is a lovely colonial town 135 miles south of Bisbee. The historic Posada Rio Sonora, owned by a delightful couple from Alabama, offers comfortable rooms, excellent food, and easy access to terrific birding. At 2,200 feet, Banámichi was our third distinct birding habitat with a mix of agricultural and riparian sites. The pueblo area, designated an eBird hotspot shortly after our visit, produced 76 species in a day and a half. Our five-night, thousand-mile, thousand-photo loop gave us 137 species, including 25 new Sonora birds. This was truly a triple header birding adventure not to be missed. ■

Bob writes nature and travel articles. He writes a birding column for an Arizona newspaper, and he and his wife, Prudy, travel and bird extensively throughout Mexico. His email is bobandpru@aol.com



Black Phoebe, Rio Sonora

ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

Since January 2009 we have revamped communications with our members and have been praised repeatedly for our *Vermilion Flycatcher* magazine and our weekly e-mail news. Thank you for helping us achieve this success!

However, most people in Tucson and southeast Arizona are not yet members of Tucson Audubon. How do we reach them?

This year, 2016, is the year we engage the larger community—and we need your help.

A timeline of engagement events for the coming year accompanies this article. Will you spread the word to your friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors—to the members of your churches and clubs? *Will you bring people to our events and introduce them to Audubon?*

As Maia Stark shares to the right, without our birding field trips and some key people in her life, she might not have become the budding birder she is today at age 10! How many people in your life just need a nudge from you?

This year, we ask every member to introduce at least one person to both the work and play of Tucson Audubon. Take them birding, bring them to an event! Bring more than one person, if you can! Let's double our membership!

An ideal way to add someone new into our community is to bring them to **Sweetwater Wetlands on Saturday, February 13** when we will hold the first annual **Tucson Meet Your Birds** event (see details on page 15).

And when you introduce someone to our world of birds, please share your story on our Facebook page with the hashtag **#EngageTucsonAudubon** or email it to engage@tucsonaudubon.org. How did they respond? What did they like best?

Together we can grow the audience for our mission: *The protection and stewardship of southeast Arizona's biological diversity through the study and enjoyment of birds and the places they live.*

TIMELINE OF TUCSON AUDUBON ENGAGEMENT FOR 2016

- Living With Nature Monthly Programs**—October thru May: Tucson, Green Valley, Oro Valley
- 7 Saturdays in Patagonia**—October thru May
- Education courses**—spring
- Tucson Audubon's 8th Annual Gala**—February 9
- Environment Day—Water is Life: Creating a Conservation Vision of Arizona's Water Future**—February 9
- Tucson Meet Your Birds at Sweetwater Wetlands/GBBC**—February 13
- Spring Membership Outing to Catalina State Park**—March
- Cyclovia Tucson**—April 10
- Tucson Festival of Books**—March 12 & 13
- SAHBA Home and Garden Show**—April 8 thru 10
- Birdathon**—April 8 thru May 8
- Tucson Bird Count**—April 15 thru May 15
- Southeast Arizona Bird Festival**—August 11 thru 14
- Education courses**—fall
- OktoBIRDfest**—October
- SAHBA Home and Garden Show**—October



Jeff Webster

Living With Nature Monthly Programs

7 Saturdays in Patagonia



Claudia Campos

Tucson Meet Your Birds at Sweetwater



Chrissy Kondrat-Smith

SAHBA Home and Garden Show



Jennie MacFarland

NITY IN 2016!

Kendall Kroesen, *Bringing Birds Home Program Manager*

MAIA STARK

My name is Maia Stark and I am ten years old. I have been involved in birding and the Tucson Audubon Society since I was six. The first time I really went birding was on a Saturday morning bird walk at Tucson Audubon's Mason Center with my mom. This inspired me to learn more about birds. Soon after, I began birding more and went on birding trips led by Tucson Audubon.



My favorite event is Tucson Audubon's annual Birdathon (and the Birdy BBQ that follows). In the Birdathon, teams of birders first gather pledges per bird, then go out and find and identify as many birds as they can in 24 hours. I have done the Birdathon three years in a row, and in all years combined, I have raised a little over \$6,000 for the Tucson Audubon Society! But my birding experience has been more than

raising money and seeing how many birds I can find as fast as I can. I once sat by a stream for a full twenty minutes just watching an Anna's Hummingbird bathe because it was so pretty and cute.

I would like to give a special thank you to Sandy Elers, who introduced me to the Birdathon. Sandy did the Birdathon with me my first year and has pledged generously all the other years. I would also like to thank David Bygott and Jeanette Hanby, who have taught me much about birding by taking me on several birding trips and doing the Birdathon with me for two years. Thank you to all my other donors, too, for supporting and giving to a cause that protects and helps birds and the environment around them. From absentmindedly watching a House Finch from my window to looking in awe at an Elegant Trogon deep in the greenery of Sycamore Canyon, birds make my life a better place to live. Without the Tucson Audubon Society, I may never have had the opportunity to get to know about birds and birding.

MICHELE FRIELLA

I never paid attention to birds before I moved to Tucson, which is something I truly regret now. After all, I have considered myself a nature lover since my childhood. How could I hike through the forest and not be curious about birds the same way I was curious about mammals and native plants?

When my husband and I moved to Tucson in 2013 to assist my elderly parents (both avid birders, by the way), I decided I would explore the canyons, mountains, and desert of southern Arizona. Not knowing anyone in Tucson except my parents, I started attending Tucson Audubon field trips and walks to learn about birds and the area. I found the weekly Wednesday morning walk at Sweetwater to be particularly welcoming—the leader at the time, Mike, was very patient with my rudimentary questions week after week.

In January 2014, I became a regular at the Sweetwater walks for about a year. The most important things I gained from that experience were learning about new birds each week and meeting new people I enjoyed. I became confident enough to bird alone and discovered I could usually identify birds using a guidebook. Transformative!

I started a birding group in my afraid-of-nature neighborhood, and people came! I met a respected Tucson Audubon volunteer on a Tucson Audubon field trip and am now a member of her renowned women's birding group! I participated in Elegant Trogon and Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys and discovered that getting up at 3:30am to meet Jennie in the dark led to an exciting day! Knowing that Kendall is looking for ways to reach out to a broader community, I proposed leading an outside-the-feeder field trip for Tucson Audubon and he supported my idea!

January 22nd is my two-year anniversary of the first Sweetwater walk that changed my outdoor life. I have scheduled my own outing to Sweetwater for that date in 2016, a wonderful way to commemorate birding in my life.

Birdathon 2016



Dan Sidle

Cyclovia Tucson



Jennie MacFarland

Tucson Bird Count



Jennie MacFarland

Southeast Arizona Birding Festival



Sara Pike

THE FRUITS OF CROSS-POLLINATION: REFLECTING ON A YEAR OF COLLABORATIVE WORK

Andy Bennett, Restoration Project Manager and K-12 Educator

The inspiring article found on the inside cover of this issue, provided by Changemaker High School (CMHS) principal Luis Perales, alludes to the amazing new fruits made possible when we engage new audiences in innovative partnerships and participate in “cross-pollination.” Tucson Audubon’s Growing Skills for the Green Economy project, co-created with Changemaker High and funded through National Audubon’s Toyota TogetherGreen program, is one such cross-pollination adventure that accomplished a tremendous amount of lasting results and engaged each partners in exciting new ways.

As this chapter of our partnership with CMHS draws to an end, a bit of reflection on accomplishments and project highlights so far seems appropriate. A brief list of vital project stats:

- Hours dedicated to the project by students, teachers, and Audubon staff: **1,830**
- Greenhouses and shadehouses built for growing native plants: **3**
- Number of rainwater-harvesting cisterns installed (in greenhouses): **4**
- Total gallon capacity of rainwater-harvesting cisterns: **2,640**
- Water-harvesting raingardens constructed: **8**
- Acres of invasive buffelgrass and Russian thistle removed: **2**
- Native plants important for wildlife planted in pollinator raingardens: **185**
- Total gallons of rainwater all eight gardens can harvest: **7,500**
- Pots planted with native seed important for wildlife: **400**
- Community events selling student-grown native plants: **1**
- Trips to regional restoration projects for cross-pollination learning: **2**
- **New classes dedicated to Restorative Ecology: 1**

Perhaps one of the most fruitful moments of the project occurred during a trip to Patagonia, AZ while the CMHS students were touring pollinator gardens created through another innovative partnership. Over the past three years, Patagonia Union High School and Patagonia-based Borderlands Restoration have partnered to grow the Borderlands Earth Care Youth program (BECY), a paid internship for students to learn practical, marketable skills in habitat restoration, sustainable agriculture, and conservation land management. The BECY and Tucson Audubon/CMHS programs share important goals, strategies, and challenges, as well as some key differences, so the meeting of both groups of students that day was a truly productive learning exchange.

Back in Tucson, November brought not only cooler temps, but also the very first conference of the Society for Ecological Restoration’s Southwest Chapter—and the CMHS folks got a free pass. The conference hosted many highly informative presentations spanning the breadth of restoration endeavors in the Southwest and Northern Mexico. The event culminated in a series of presentations that tied the scientific with the practical, and the adult realm with the young adult world. It was wonderful to hear CMHS instructor Oscar Medina and students Caleb Pipes, Brandon Landeros, and Will Wimmer summarize their work so far and articulate their understanding of the principles behind that work. At the close of their presentation, the audience gave the team an enthusiastic standing ovation.

The level of interest that this project has inspired in teachers and students at CMHS is remarkable. Several side projects have sprouted from our work, including endeavors to remove invasive buffelgrass on school grounds and plant native shade trees in the school neighborhood to combat the urban heat-island effect. Without a doubt, one of the proudest outcomes of our work together was the establishment of the school’s newest course, the Restorative Ecology Lab. Tucson Audubon is deeply dedicated to developing this program and expanding it to other schools, and **we’re actively seeking funding to do so.**



CMHS students exchange ideas with Patagonia High interns of the BECY program at their school’s pollinator gardens in Patagonia



Santa Rita High (SRHS) students and faculty building a water harvesting media luna at Atturbury Wash



SRHS students birding at Atturbury to learn about measuring ecosystem health



SRHS students tune-in to birdsong and nature at Atturbury



CMHS student Will Wimmer getting to know one of the Nature Conservancy’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve’s giant cottonwoods

TUCSON MEET YOUR BIRDS

ENGAGE THE PUBLIC AT SWEETWATER WETLANDS, FEBRUARY 13, 2016

Is Tucson Audubon a small club for bird watchers or are we a big force in the community?

While the former might be true, we think the latter should be true as well. That's why we are planning a yearlong effort to engage with the public, promote our mission, and communicate the joy of birding. Only by engaging with our community will we grow to make a bigger difference for birds.

This initiative kicks off on Saturday, February 13 with *Tucson Meet Your Birds* at Sweetwater Wetland. This event will run 7 am–2 pm and is a major event to invite the public to experience our world—the world of birds and conservation!

How many new people can we get out to the wetlands that day? We want to find out! We are looking for youth, people that have never been to Sweetwater, people new to Tucson, and people new to birding—in short, anyone interested in a day outdoors enjoying birds! We want as many people as possible to experience something new that day, and to learn what Tucson Audubon can do for them.

The event will include:

- Birding experts around the wetlands, with spotting scopes to help people see birds
- Up-close looks at live birds brought by Tucson-area wildlife rehabilitation groups
- Special outreach to kids
- Tucson Water experts offering info on Sweetwater operations
- Promotion of key Tucson Audubon programs and membership
- Food trucks
- Promotion of the Great Backyard Bird Count (February 12–15)

WHAT WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO DO

Tucson Audubon staff and volunteers will plan and implement this event. But to make it a success, we need your help getting as many people as possible out to the wetlands that day. So we are asking you to:

- Bring a friend or neighbor who's new to birding
- Bring a birder who has just moved to Tucson
- Bring someone who has never been to Sweetwater Wetlands
- Bring someone who does not know about Tucson Audubon
- Bring your binoculars and point out birds to folks around the wetlands!

If you would like to volunteer for this event (sit at a table, help people find birds, help set up, tear down, etc.) contact Sharon Long at slong@tucsonaudubon.org or (520) 209-1811.

tucsonaudubon.org/tucsonmeetyourbirds



Did You Know?

Sweetwater Wetlands was built in 1996.

It cleaned backwash from the filters at Tucson Water's reclaimed water station.

Effluent (treated wastewater) flows through the wetlands and into recharge basins, where it sinks into the ground to be recovered during times of high demand for reclaimed water.

It was also intended to be an urban wildlife habitat and outdoor classroom.

303 bird species have been seen at the wetlands!



Red-winged Blackbird, David Quanrud

Common Yellowthroat, David Quanrud

Top to Bottom: Great Egret, David Quanrud Ducks, Lois Manowitz; Young Birders walk, Chrissy Kondrat-Smith; Sweetwater Wetland Gazebo, Kendall Kroesen

CIRCLE Z RANCH: BIRDS & BUSINESS HELPING US FULFILL OUR

Since my arrival in March, I have been on a mission to meet Tucson Audubon supporters. On a recent trip to our Paton Center for Hummingbirds, we dropped by the Circle Z Ranch, a Birds & Business Alliance member. As we visited with owner and operator, Diana Nash, Keith suggested this article for the *Vermilion Flycatcher*. Diana immediately suggested that in order to write about the ranch, we should *experience* it.

We arrived at the ranch as any other guests might, tired and hungry. Diana welcomed us and encouraged us to sit and enjoy their home-style dinner with the other guests visiting the ranch. Eagerly, we did so. Our table companions included a gentleman from Germany who works in the technology industry and a woman who does security analysis for the US military. “Red,” as she instructed us to call her, was at the ranch to relax after an overseas deployment. Martin was making his fourth visit to the ranch in three seasons—I discovered it is quite common among Circle Z visitors to make repeat visits to the ranch. I was eager to learn more about Circle Z and to explore why Diana had become a Tucson Audubon sponsor.



Valuable riparian habitat on the Ranch.

Sending the guests off on a day-long ride the following day, Diana cleared her schedule to spend the morning with Keith and me, on horseback. Having grown up riding, I relished this four-legged way to see the ranch and interview Diana. As an inexperienced rider, Keith was less enthusiastic about our mode of mobility. Delightfully, by the end of the ride, Keith was sold on riding as a means of connecting differently with the natural environment.

From two horses behind, I peppered Diana with questions about the ranch and its practices, learning that in 1974, Diana’s mother-in-law, Lucia Nash, returned to the ranch having visited as a child and



Diana Nash



Karen and Keith getting to know the Ranch the old fashioned way.

purchased it in order to preserve its legacy as ranch. Since then, it has been operated by the Nash family for the enjoyment of visitors from throughout the world. This year marks its 90th anniversary, making it Arizona’s longest operating dude ranch.

In talking with Diana, I see that what sets their ranch apart is a deep commitment to quality. Certainly, their cordiality to guests, special touches like fresh flower buds in the rooms and the personal atmosphere created by Nash family members sitting down to dinner with visitors has cultivated a winning business model. But the Circle Z Ranch is more than a successful business. Comprising some 6300 acres, the land itself holds a powerful connection for the Nash family.

Diana proudly shared that part of their horse herd at the ranch, which numbers about 100, is bred, born and specially trained by expert wranglers at the ranch for use by riders of all skills and abilities. Their cattle, in numbers only large enough to retain ranch status, are fenced separately to the north of the ranch grounds. Knowing that cattle have damaged the watershed and habitat at the north end of Patagonia Lake, as we rode through the watershed I asked if the free ranging cattle we were seeing belonged to Circle Z—they do not. The Nash family shares this birder’s frustration with stock owners who fail to control their roaming cattle.

In talking with Diana, it was clear that the Nash’s connection to the land and their beliefs regarding conservation are long-held convictions, convictions which have led them to permanently preserve against future development all but the 1000 or so acres on which the ranch facilities sit. The remaining acres cannot be developed.

This is truly a win-win. Because it adjoins the Nature Conservancy preserve, and encompasses a significant portion of Sonoita Creek, one of Arizona’s few year round flowing streams, the Ranch plays a big role in preserving important habitat—certainly for birds, including the array of hummingbirds that visit the Paton Center—but also for wildlife in general. This, in turn attracts people who seek

Visit tucsonaudubon.org/alliance to learn about the products and services offered by our Bird & Business Alliance partners

INESS ALLIANCE PARTNERS... MISSION

Karen Fogas, Executive Director; all images by by Diana Nash

a natural experience, which they readily find, both at the Circle Z and in the surrounding area. Visitors to the ranch are able to see firsthand the area's attributes and leave southeast Arizona with a new appreciation for the rich array of birds and animals to be found here, the fragility of the desert environment and the need to care for this tremendous resource.

That is where the connection to Tucson Audubon comes in, a connection Diana recognized when we first acquired the Paton property. At the end of the day, we may have different motivations, but our goals are surprisingly similar: protect and conserve this incredible land, and engage people in ways that help them understand its importance and value for the numerous species that depend upon it, and recognize that by doing so, we benefit and enhance our own lives. 



Comfortable accommodations



Celebrating the holidays



Classic southeast Arizona landscapes



Historic surroundings

CROWBACK BIRDING AT CIRCLE Z

Keith Ashley, Development Director

We arrived at Circle Z Ranch after dark and a little late for birding—or so I assumed, but in my room I discovered two Arthur Singer prints hanging above the bed: a pair of Northern Mockingbirds, and another of Eastern Bluebirds. More modernist paintings of Gambel's and Scaled Quail bookended the room from opposite walls. There were even birds on the bathroom tiles and the bedroom curtains. Good omens for morning birding, I thought.

After dinner, lively Patagonia naturalist Vincent Pinto almost added to my list of unexpected sightings as he provided guests with an astronomy program by bonfire light. He described a constellation I had never even heard of—*Corvus*, the Raven. Though not in our line of site this evening, the discovery got me thinking—there are always new ways to encounter birds, including through historical and cultural contexts like constellations of the ancients and (soon-to-be) 90-year-old dude ranches, like the Circle Z.

Find out how to bird while horseback riding by reading the rest of Keith's story at tucsonaudubon.org/circlez.

Meet our newest Birds & Business Alliance members and learn more about the program on page 23.



Rejuvenating scenery on the Ranch.

CONSERVATION AND EDUCATION NEWS

Matt Clark, Conservation Policy Analyst, and Chris McVie, Conservation Committee Chair

SunZia Transmission Line: Environmentally Compatible?

This past October and November, the Arizona Power Plant and Line Siting Committee held a series of public hearings on the proposed SunZia Southwest Transmission Line application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility (CEC). A CEC is required by Arizona state law before any new power plant or transmission line can be constructed. Among other factors, this law requires “special consideration to the protection of areas unique because of biological wealth or because they are habitats for rare and endangered species.” Based on this requirement, Tucson Audubon opposes SunZia’s application, and we have advocated for denial of a CEC for this controversial project. Our research indicates there is not a demonstrated need for SunZia to build here, and we oppose the proposed route through the San Pedro River Valley—a globally significant bird migration corridor that supports biological wealth and habitats for rare and endangered species.

With so much at stake, Tucson Audubon joined several other leading conservation organizations to attend the hearings and submit comment letters (see Tucson Audubon’s comment letter at tucsonaudubon.org/sunzia). We were unable to intervene in the proceedings without expensive legal counsel, but three leaders from the environmental community stepped up to intervene on their own behalf: Peter Else, Norm Meader, and Christina McVie. These three “Pro Se intervenors” dedicated countless hours to making a strong case against the approval of a CEC for SunZia, and effectively advocated at minimum for key conditions to be included.

In the end, the Line Siting Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the CEC to the Arizona Corporation Commission. In his final statement, Line Siting Committee Chairman Chenal stated, “The jewel, the San Pedro River Valley is pristine. That tour that we took, it was beautiful, absolutely beautiful. And my heart just breaks that, you know, there is going to be a transmission line that’s going through there... there are legal impediments to bringing it through Tucson because of Section 10, 404 Permits, historic districts, some condemnation matters, and so the path of least resistance is the pristine valley, the San Pedro River Valley, that’s protected, given special consideration by statute, it just angers me...So I vote aye, reluctantly, and it is painful for me to do it. Because I think that statute does mean something, that statute that requires special consideration be given to areas such as the San Pedro River Valley.” Chairman Chenal’s statement, while heartfelt, was clearly

contrary to how he cast his vote. And the Committee’s unanimous vote in favor of approval leaves us wondering if the statute governing the CEC does in fact mean something or not.

The positive news is that the *Pro Se* intervenors were able to successfully advocate for some very significant mitigation measures to be included as conditions of the CEC. For example, one condition requires the project developer to “identify and require the necessary steps to avoid the creation of new roads, including the employment of aerial construction for the setting of transmission structures and conductors within the San Pedro River Valley in the eight-mile area that includes Paige Canyon.” That same condition states, “Nothing in the foregoing precludes the Applicant from considering or utilizing aerial construction along other portions of the Route.” Tucson Audubon continues to advocate that aerial construction and maintenance should be required for the whole segment through the San Pedro River Valley in order to avoid and minimize negative impacts.

Another significant condition that the intervenors successfully advocated for was: “In the event Pima County loses the ability to claim credit pursuant to their proposed Multi Species Conservation Plan... with respect to currently existing lands it leases from the ASLD because of the SunZia Project, the Applicant will either work with Pima County to secure replacement lands or provide compensatory mitigation to offset such loss.”

Mitigation measures specific to bird conservation were also included as a condition: “The Applicant shall design the transmission lines to incorporate reasonable measures to minimize impacts to raptors, cranes, and waterfowl... The APP or equivalent plan shall address the application of recommended measures to minimize the risk of collision, as described in the 2012 guidelines of the Avian Power Line Interaction Committee.”

The Line Siting Committee’s recommendation to approve the CEC will now go before the Arizona Corporation Commission, which has the final say. The next ACC Open Meeting will likely be held on January 13th and 14th, 2016, at which time we anticipate the Commission will consider the Line Siting Committee’s recommendation and cast their final vote for the SunZia project. We encourage you to attend this meeting and speak out against the approval of the CEC and/or for the inclusion of comprehensive conditions to protect sensitive natural and cultural resources. **A strong public turnout will be crucial, so please mark your calendars and plan to attend!**

Wildlife Agencies Weigh in on Villages at Vigneto

The Villages at Vigneto (Vigneto) is a 12,324-acre mixed residential and commercial development proposed between the rugged Whetstone Mountains and the biologically rich riparian habitats astride the San Pedro River. Vigneto’s large size and sensitive location causes concern over the project’s impacts to a bird migration corridor of hemispheric importance, habitat for numerous sensitive species, and the river valley’s vital network of conservation and mitigation lands. While mitigation lands are protected with restrictive covenants, the riparian habitat



SunZia hearings

Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bryan Smith



values that make them so ecologically valuable could be degraded or lost if groundwater pumping results in reductions of surface and subsurface water flows. The configuration of Vigneto’s footprint and open space will also influence the viability of regional wildlife corridors.

Both the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AzGFD) have written letters indicating their concerns and desire to be consulted on the project.

In a July 14th, 2015 letter from the FWS to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) the FWS states: “We have no records of interagency consultation pursuant to section 7 of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531-1544, et seq.) (Act) for the Villages at Vigneto.” The letter states the project “...may affect two species that have been listed since your previous “no affect” determination; and (2) constitutes our official recommendation that you request interagency consultation on your permit issuance.” The permit is a Section 404 permit for “dredge and fill” impacts to jurisdictional waters protected under the Clean Water Act. The issuance of a 404 permit must thoroughly consider impacts to threatened and endangered species. The two newly-listed species referred to in the FWS letter are the threatened Northern Mexican garter snake and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (WYBC).

Recently, Tucson Audubon conducted surveys for the threatened WYBC in major drainages of eight sky island mountain ranges in southeast Arizona. The surveys detected active WYBC territories in the Whetstone Mountains in close proximity to Vigneto’s planning boundary. This new scientific data supports the need for formal interagency consultation.

An October 30th, 2015 AzGFD letter to the Benson Planning and Zoning Commission provides constructive suggestions for Vigneto’s Final Community Master Plan. AzGFD recommends Vigneto employ water

Conservation Corner

Kendall Kroesen, *Bringing Birds Home Program Manager*

ENGAGE: SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Conservation information can only have a big impact is when it is shared. Tucson Audubon shares an enormous amount of information with you about conservation and threats to bird. But it needs to reach beyond our membership.

So we ask you to share it, too.

We often ask you to share conservation positions with leaders—council members, supervisors, state representatives, etc. But another very useful way to share information is to get involved in your homeowners association or neighborhood association.



An example of urban landscaping to create wildlife habitat. Kendall Kroesen



Neighborhood

Many, many times I have been asked if there’s anything Tucson Audubon can do about homeowners associations that remove native vegetation, plant invasive plants, or otherwise minimize the value of a community for birds. There isn’t—*unless* they invite me to tour the subdivision or to speak at a meeting. And there’s often no friendly face in the homeowners association board, or its landscape committee, to extend that invitation.

Whether you have a homeowners’ or neighborhood association, *you can be that person*. Even more valuable than having me visit is having you work from the inside! You can be that friendly face. You can educate people about invasive plants. You can educate people about landscaping with natives that support birds. You can educate people about rainwater harvesting and water conservation.

Consider getting active in your association now!

conservation measures; landscape with native vegetation (avoid using exotic, invasive plant species like Russian olive and fountain grass); protect and enhance wildlife habitat connectivity (particularly across Arizona Highway 90); minimize potential human-wildlife conflicts; and consult with AzGFD to formulate a wildlife mitigation plan. The letter states: “Because the Villages at Vigneto would represent such a substantial loss of wildlife habitat, the Department urges the City to work with El Dorado to formulate a plan to mitigate for this loss. The Department is available to assist with development of a mitigation plan and can provide input regarding species impacts and proposals to offset the habitat loss.”

Tucson Audubon is taking a leadership role to raise public awareness and ensure that decision-making agencies utilize the best available science and adequately evaluate, avoid and minimize environmental impacts throughout Vigneto’s design and approval processes. Visit tucsonaudubon.org/conservationnews to read the wildlife agencies’ letters and learn how you, too, can contribute to a better outcome.

Pima County Open Space Bond Vote Disappoints

This past November, Pima County voters rejected all seven of the proposed bond initiatives, including Proposition 430, Natural Area Conservation and Historic Preservation, which Tucson Audubon endorsed and supported. Proposition 430 received 39.75% votes in favor and 60.25% opposed.

The final vote tally was surprising, especially given voter’s strong support of previous open space bonds. One possible cause is low voter turnout, since the vote for Proposition 430 took place in an “off-election year.” Regardless, this is an unfortunate result for conservation, as it will limit the County’s ability to purchase mitigation lands under the (pending) Section 10 permit that will require lawful development and capital infrastructure projects to offset impacts to threatened and endangered species habitats. The county may attempt to put forth a revised bond package to voters next November. Tucson Audubon will continue to advocate for open space protection and we encourage you to get the vote out in support of the next open space bond election. Thanks go out to those of you who turned out in support!

Help Reduce Bird Collisions with Windows

Does this scenario sound familiar? Imagine sitting at home enjoying your day when suddenly—THUMP!—you cringe at the sound of an unlucky bird hitting your window.

Sadly, birds often collide with windows because they mistake the glass’s reflection of the surrounding environment for a clear flight path. Between **365 and 988 million birds** are killed each year in the United States when they hit windows, making windows one of the biggest threats to bird populations. Backyard birds and migratory birds are the most frequent victims, but common and declining species alike are lost this way.

After six years of research, American Bird Conservancy’s (ABC’s) Glass

Wildlife Garden Plant Profile

Lynn Hassler, Garden Volunteer Captain; photos by Lynn Hassler

PARRY PENSTEMON

Scientific name: *Penstemon parryi*

Family: Plantaginaceae (Plantain), formerly in Scrophulariaceae (Figwort)

Native range: Southern Arizona and Sonora, Mexico, 1500–5000 feet along washes, in canyons, and on desert slopes.

Wildlife value: Nectar and pollen attract hummingbirds, verdins, moths, bees, and other pollinating insects; finches, quail, and lizards eat the blooms.



In habitat with brittlebush and desert marigold

Parry penstemon forms a dense rosette of leaves that hugs the ground, nearly unnoticeable until it blooms. Once plants send up their long vertical flower spikes (often to 4 feet tall) with bright pink tubular-shaped blooms, the splashy architectural specimens become difficult to ignore. And wherever you plant them, hummingbirds are sure to follow.

These show-stoppers provide captivating seasonal flower displays in late winter–spring, especially when planted en masse. Use them anywhere you want color: for a showy border in a rock or cactus garden or as part of a backyard wildflower display. They also look attractive interplanted with accent plants such as agaves and yuccas.

Parry penstemon is a short-lived perennial, but reseeds easily. Plants hold their own in the face of heat and drought and are cold hardy to 15 degrees. Grow in fast-draining soil in full sun and water periodically fall to spring. Plants may be obtained from nurseries or germinated from

seed in the fall. To promote naturalizing, leave spent flower stalks on plants so that they may self-sow, or collect seeds and scatter wherever you desire a patch of color next season.



Penstemon means “five stamens.” If you look inside a flower, you only see four stamens—the fifth, called a staminode, has lost its anther and instead has a cluster of dense hairs near the tip. The bearded staminode gives rise to the common name for penstemons: “beardtongue.” The species name honors Charles Christopher Parry, a 19th century American physician and plant collector.

This series profiles plants that grow in the Tucson Audubon Wildlife Garden at University Boulevard and 5th Avenue.

Collisions Program now presents a comprehensive resource to address this threat. Their report, at abcbirds.org/get-involved/bird-smart-glass/, covers eighteen proven products for existing and new windows, for every size and shape imaginable and for every budget. Some products are for new construction while others are for residential use. To learn about products designed for windows in your home, scroll down and click on “consumer products.” Each of these products has earned a rating of “effective” or “highly effective” at deterring bird collisions.



Bird strike outline, Bill Gracey/Creative Commons

Tucson Audubon encourages you to use these products, especially for windows where you have found dead or stunned birds or marks that suggest that an impact has taken place. Even if you have never found dead birds, your windows may still be

killing them; injured birds often fly or walk away after a collision, only to succumb to their injuries or scavengers in another location. Tucson Audubon's Nature Shop carries WindowAlert decals which, when used according to specifications, were found effective in preventing collisions. The decals are minimally visible from the inside but reflect ultraviolet light, giving birds a visual cue to steer clear of windows. Other products found effective by the ABC must be ordered directly from manufacturers.

Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative Selects Madrean Transboundary Region for Pilot Project

The Desert Landscape Conservation Cooperative (Desert LCC) is a partnership spearheaded by the Bureau of Reclamation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “The Desert LCC is a bi-national, self-directed, non-regulatory regional partnership formed and directed by resource management entities as well as interested public and private entities in the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan Desert regions of the southwestern United States and northern Mexico. Through collaborative partnerships, the Desert LCC seeks to provide scientific and technical support, coordination, and communication to resource managers and the broader Desert LCC community to address climate change and other landscape-scale ecosystem stressors.” See: usbr.gov/dlcc/

The Desert LCC is developing a landscape conservation planning and design (LCPD) process focused on arid grasslands and shrublands, streams and springs. This past year, the Desert LCC solicited nominations for LCPD pilot regions. Tucson Audubon joined with Audubon Arizona, Cascabel Conservation Association, Friends of the San Pedro River, Lower San Pedro Watershed Alliance and Wildlands Network to nominate the San Pedro River Watershed. We also endorsed a larger Madrean Transboundary region nominated by Wildlands Network et al. We are excited to report these two nominations were combined and selected as one of three LCPDs. Tucson Audubon looks forward to contributing to this science-based, collaborative endeavor, which we anticipate will lead to new partnerships, information, opportunities and funding for bird habitat conservation in our region.



HANK BRODKIN 1935–2015 *Bob Behrstock*

Henry Martin David (Hank) Brodtkin was well known in southwestern birding and butterflying circles. On November 19th, 2015, Hank passed away at the age of 80 from a combination of coronary and pulmonary problems. Hank and his wife Priscilla were active (you could say aggressive) in the southern California birding community, participated in international bird research with Earthwatch, and Hank was also a MAPS bird bander on the San Pedro River. In 1997 he and Priscilla settled in lower Carr Canyon where they amassed a large yard list that included many rare birds and butterflies, as well as a host of visiting writers, biologists, and naturalists from around the world. As a board member, field trip leader, or simply a chapter participant, Hank was associated with a number of organizations including Los Angeles Audubon Society, North American Butterfly Association (NABA), the Southeastern Arizona Butterfly Association (SEABA) of which he and Priscilla were founding members, Huachuca Audubon Society, the Lepidopterists' Society, the Texas Butterfly Festival, Wings Over Willcox, the Verde Valley Birding & Nature Festival, and the Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival.

Along with Priscilla and Bob Stewart, Hank coauthored a photographic guide to the butterflies of Arizona, and later, he and Richard Bailowitz wrote a butterfly finding guide for Arizona. Hank was a wonderful story teller and would regale his friends with detailed stories about learning to birdwatch at summer camp during his childhood on the East Coast, his 43 year-long career as a sound editor for movies and television shows, old girlfriends, and various birding and butterflying trips. A prolific photographer, he and Priscilla shared their pictures on the screen, giving programs to hundreds of other naturalists at club meetings and nature festivals. On a personal note: Hank was a good friend, a fun traveling companion, and a keen observer of both nature and the human condition. I had lunch with him two days before he left us. He was frail, but was still able to make me laugh; warning me, as always “Don't get old.” He told me he was ready for whatever came. I will miss him.

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 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 x3 or rarebirdalert@tucsonaudubon.org.

TUCSON AUDUBON FIELD TRIPS

By Kendall Kroesen, Field Trip Coordinator

tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips

If you cannot sign up online, please contact the field trip coordinator at 520 209-1806.

Birds. No other part of the natural world provides us the same combination of accessibility and challenge. The common ones are easy to learn, but beyond them is a world of 10,000 species, multiple plumages, strange behaviors, and unique vocalizations to provide you any level of challenge you want.



Atturbury Wash birding trip, James Dolph

Tucson Audubon's birding field trips are the best way to accept that challenge. Day trips go all over southeast Arizona, while occasional multi-day trips go outside our region. There are trips appropriate for beginners and experts alike.

Field trips are Tucson Audubon's flagship activity. They are often the way people new to birding—or new to southeast Arizona—first encounter our organization. It is important that we do this well.

In 2016, we will revitalize the field trip program to make it relevant and easy to participate for the greatest number of people possible. Here are just a few of the many things we hope to accomplish:

- Offer more field trips
- Take field trips to more places
- Promote trips better
- Run themed trips, such as:
 - Visit under-birded hotspots around southeast Arizona
 - Birding for hikers
 - Birding Subirdia (urban trips)
 - Birding for singles

We also plan to honor our great field trip leaders and recruit more of them.

This is the time to reacquaint yourself with Tucson Audubon's birding field trips, and perhaps more importantly, this is the time to reach out to friends and introduce them to birding trips. In doing so, you will help keep our organization vital and accomplish its mission of promoting "the protection and stewardship of southeast Arizona's biological diversity through the study and enjoyment of birds and the places they live."

Here are a few of the trips scheduled early in 2016. Go to tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips to sign up, get more information and to see more trips.

January 23, Saturday—Atturbury Wash, Lincoln Regional Park. Leader: Kendall Kroesen
January 30, Saturday—Hawks for Beginners, Avra Valley. Leader: John Higgins
February 16, Tuesday—Reid Park Ramble. Leader: John Higgins
Wednesday mornings, weekly—Sweetwater Wetlands
First and third Saturdays of the month—Tucson Audubon's Mason Center

Suggestions for making trips better?
Problems registering for trips?
Want to know more?

Contact Kendall Kroesen, fieldtrips@tucsonaudubon.org, (520) 209-1806



Reid Park birding, great egret on small pond, Kendall Kroesen



Field trips are educational! Homer Hansen



Dove Mountain birding, Kendall Kroesen



Tucson Audubon thanks our **Birds & Business Alliance** Members, who have shown their support for bird conservation through annual contributions and in-kind donations. **Please show you appreciate their support for us by supporting them.** Visit tucsonaudubon.org/alliance for more info, including links to member websites.

GOLD

- Carl Zeiss Sports Optics
- Circle Z Ranch
- Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold
- GeoInnovation LLC
- Riverpark Inn
- Tucson Electric Power

STERLING

- Adventure Birding Company
- Rockjumper BirdingTours
- Solipaso Tours

SILVER

- Celestron
- Farmers Investment Co (FICO)
- Leica Sport Optics
- Lori Pascarella, Merrill Lynch
- Sunglow Ranch
- Swarovski Optik

COPPER

- A Feathered Nest in Amado
- Affinity Wealth Management
- Associated Benefits Specialists, Inc.
- Arizona Birder Casitas
- Bed and Bagels of Tucson
- Brooklyn Pizza Company
- Casitas at Smokey Springs Ranch
- Chuparosa Inn
- Desert Trails Bed & Breakfast
- Down By the River B&B
- Dr. Gann's Diet of Hope
- Financial Architects
- Hughes Federal Credit Union
- Kimberlyn Drew, Realtor
- The Living Fence
- Visit Tucson
- Opticron USA
- Originate Natural Building Materials Showroom
- Pima Federal Credit Union
- Quailway Cottage
- Staybridge Suites Tucson
- Sundance Press
- Tucson/Lazydays KOA
- Victor Emanuel Nature Tours
- WINGS Birding Tours Worldwide

BIRDING TRAVEL FROM OUR BUSINESS PARTNERS

ADVENTURE BIRDING COMPANY adventurebirding.com

SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA— DAY TRIPS OFFERED YEAR-ROUND

Local birding guides based in Tucson and Portal. We specialize in providing flexible, personalized bird watching trips year-round in southeastern Arizona. Whether an individual or a large group, we can plan a custom trip for any number of days. We know where the birds are and how to find them! We also enjoy sharing knowledge about all other aspects of natural history (plants, mammals, reptiles, insects, etc).



Fairy Pitta, Jason Thompson

ROCKJUMPER—WORLDWIDE BIRDING ADVENTURES rockjumperbirding.com

BIRDING CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

Tour Dates: May 21–Jun 02 2016
Tour Price: US\$ 3,975 per person sharing
Our comprehensive Central and Eastern Europe birding tour takes in the best birding sites in four countries: Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. Though the focus is essentially the region's birds (e.g. Great Bustard, numerous owls and woodpeckers), we will certainly not neglect the many wildlife, cultural and historical highlights that we encounter.

BEST OF TAIWAN

Tour Dates: May 25–Jun 05 2016
Tour Price: US\$ 3,975 per person sharing
Our Best of Taiwan tour focuses on the endemics and other East Asian specialties in this nation's extensive pristine forests. Although most of our time will be spent in the mountains, we also visit the lowlands and coast. Highlights include Fairy Pitta, Flamecrest and Swinhoe's Pheasant to name just a few.

Welcome to our new **Copper Level** Birds & Business Alliance members!

AFFINITY WEALTH MANAGEMENT



affinitytucson.com
(520) 795-3360

Our approach is simple—make decisions that serve our clients' best interests. Affinity Wealth Management is dedicated to offering independent investment advice, a comprehensive long-range perspective on the market, rigorous account oversight, and clear client communication. Established in 2002, we are a locally-owned independent business currently maintaining portfolios for individual investors, business owners, and organizations in 14 states.

CHUPAROSA INN

chuparosainn.com
520-393-7370



The Chuparosa Inn is located in the heart of Madera Canyon, just 45 minutes from Tucson and within walking distance of several trailheads and over 250 bird species! Each of our four suites has a private exterior entrance, bathroom, patio, and mini-kitchenette. Our central location makes for easy day trips to Patagonia, Paton's, Pena Blanca Lake, the Pajarito Mountains, and Florida Canyon.

ORIGINATE NATURAL BUILDING MATERIALS SHOWROOM

originatenbm.com
520-792-4207



Established in October of 2003, Originate is a natural building materials showroom that specializes in interior finishes that are environmentally friendly, non-toxic, durable, and made from natural and renewable resources. We offer innovative and unique materials that rival the aesthetics and performance of more traditional interior finishes.

TUCSON/LAZYDAYS KOA

koa.com/campgrounds/tucson-lazydays
520-799-3701



The campground offers pull-through sites with full 30/50-amp hook-ups. No RV? Stay in one of the new two-bedroom cabins. Relax by one of two pools, or soak in the hot tubs. Other amenities include a bar and grill, an event center and meeting rooms, fitness center, dog park and complimentary Wi-Fi. Lazydays RV full service dealership is located next door.

Visit tucsonaudubon.org/alliance to learn about the products and services offered by our Bird & Business Alliance partners

TUCSON AUDUBON NATURE SHOPS

Tucson Audubon's Nature Shops provide for your needs in natural history books and guides, birding optics and accessories, and gifts right here in Tucson. We offer a great selection, the best prices, and member discounts. Remember to shop locally.

Engage with Nature

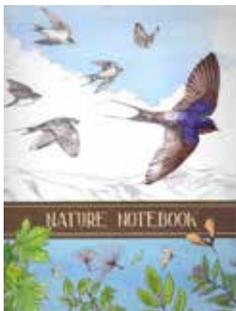
Sarah Whelan, Operations and Retail Coordinator

In a world full of screens and electronic devices, it is more important now than ever before to go outside and engage with nature. When we press pause on a game, close the laptop, or turn off the TV and go outside, something magical happens. Even something as simple as 30 minutes a day engaged with nature helps reduce stress. Nature offers a great way to spend time with those you love or to provide some much-needed time by yourself. When we go outside and take part in the natural world around us, we support our emotional, intellectual, physical, and spiritual development and wellbeing.

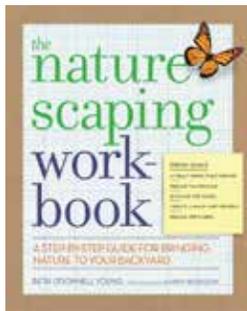
For those who are new to the outdoors, the question is "Where to start?" for those who have been birding for a lifetime, the question is

"What else can I do to engage even more?" For anyone who desires to learn more about the benefits of engaging with nature, the answer lies within the Tucson Audubon Nature Shop.

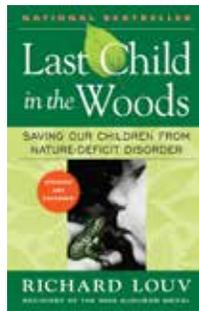
We have what you need to get started and what you need to dig deeper into your experience with the great outdoors. Our Nature Shop offers a wide selection of outdoor wear, optics, literature, guides, notebooks, and other books that will help you navigate your experience when you press pause and step outside. Whether you are starting your first nature journal, tracking your latest bird sighting, or planning your spring pollinator's garden, we have the titles you need to keep you motivated and answer your questions on how to engage with nature.



Nature Notebook, \$12.95



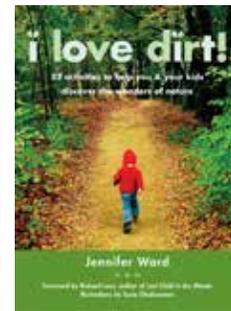
The Nature Scaping Workbook, \$24.95



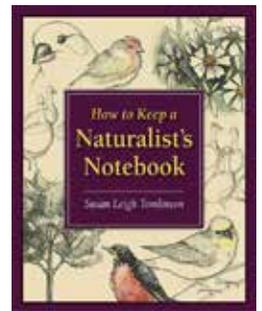
Last Child in the Woods, \$14.95



Imagine Childhood, \$19.95



I Love Dirt, \$16.99



How to Keep a Naturalist's Notebook, \$21.95

TUCSON AUDUBON NATURE SHOPS

When you support your local Tucson Audubon Society you are supporting birds and bird habitat conservation. Thank you!

SHOP HOURS

MAIN SHOP

Monday–Saturday, 10 AM–4 PM
520-629-0510 ext. 7015

300 E University Blvd #120, Tucson 85705
(corner of University & 5th Ave.)

AGUA CALIENTE PARK SHOP

*Thursday–Saturday, 10 AM–1:30 PM
520-760-7881

12325 E Roger Road, Tucson 85749

*Please call to confirm hours. The shop opens earlier and closes later during certain months. Nature Shop space generously provided by Pima County Natural Resources, Parks & Recreation

When you need a book, think of Tucson Audubon's Nature Shops first! Support your local book store.

Optics SWAROVSKI CL COMPANION 8X30

MSRP \$1,110.00 Member Price \$999.99

Lightweight, compact, and affordable, this optic has all you need and the Swarovski name to back it up.



Important Stats & Features:

- Field of View: 372 feet at 1000 yards
- Eye Relief: 15mm
- Weight: 500 g (17.6 oz.)
- Dimensions (LxW): 11.9 cm x 11.4 cm
- Fog and Waterproof
- Swarotop & Swarodur anti-reflection coatings
- Phase Correction and Swarobright Coatings on the Roof Prisms

JOIN US AT THE TUCSON FESTIVAL OF BOOKS

The Tucson Audubon Nature Shop is happy to invite you to join us at the annual Tucson Festival of Books. This year's festival will be held March 12 & 13, 9:30 am–5:30 pm.

It is our hope to spread a love of birds and birding to our community through field guides and literature, and we would love for you to join us in this endeavor. Books and birds: what more could one ask for?

Engaging the Potential Birder

A review by Rick Wright

In the early twenty-first century, experienced birders are served better than ever by an impressive range of bird books. The rest of us are much less well catered for: browse the shelves (or the e-shelves) for literature helpful to new birders, and you'll find the selection limited at best. Why is this—especially when we're always so eager to recruit new and young enthusiasts to our ranks?

The secret: it's a lot harder to write for beginners than for experts. All the words and ideas so familiar to the experienced are new—by definition—to new birders, and the casual shorthand that is second nature to those of us who have spent a few years in the field strikes beginners as arcane, even exclusionary.

One recent field guide for beginners, for example, points out that cranes are readily distinguished from herons by their “tertiar bustle,” a phrase that no doubt made perfect sense to the author but that, without explanation, leaves the rest of us tempted to hang up our binoculars for good.

Even the most thoughtful “basic” guides to birds and birding are content to preach to the already converted. David Sibley's *Birding Basics*, Kenn Kaufman's unfortunately titled *Advanced Birding*, and Jonathan Alderfer and Jon Dunn's *Birding Essentials* are excellent books, highly recommended to birders at any level—but you have to already be a birder to get much use from them. It is easy to forget that there is an important stage before that: all around us are friends and family members who think they might be interested in birding, but dropping these potential birders right into a literature teeming with tertials and tarsi and tomia is almost guaranteed to convince them they are not.

Now comes the North Carolina birder, educator, and writer Nate Swick with a captivating book for those not-quite-yet birders left cold by other titles. *Birding for the Curious* is a short, simple exploration of how—and more importantly, why—to get into birding, structured as a series of brief essays each followed by one to three “activities.” The rhetorical structure is convincing: Here's what it is, here's what it does—now you try it, if you think it sounds like fun.

Tellingly and refreshingly, *Birding for the Curious* does not start out with the expected identification tricks and tips, but instead embeds what we too often think as the be-all-end-all of our hobby within discussions of what birding can mean and the many ways it can be

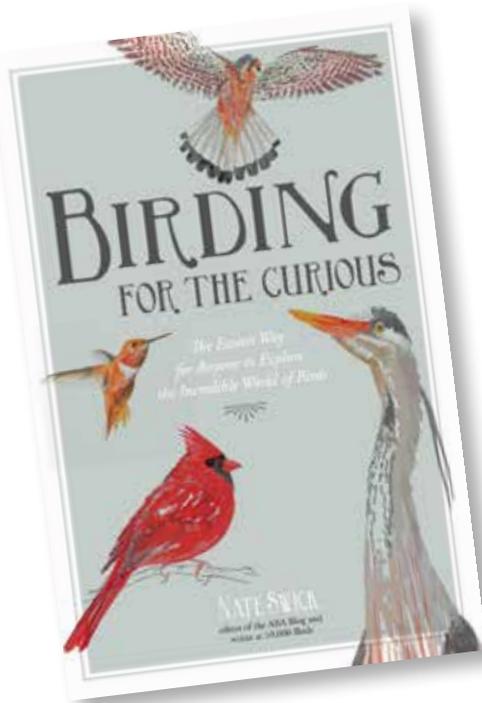
done. Rather than force-feeding his reader any particular method, Swick calmly and conversationally does exactly what his subtitle promises. He lays out a wide selection of the ways that anyone can explore birds and birding, and then leaves it up to us to choose. “The birding world is big,” he reminds us, and “there's a place for everyone in it.”

There's plenty of practical advice here, on field guides and binoculars and feeders, but all of it written with the assumption that the reader's tabula is entirely rasa. The fact that some of this—sparrows are near the end of a field guide, ducks are more likely to be seen on open water than ice—will be obvious to more experienced birders simply demonstrates how admirably the author has anticipated the questions and confusions we all go through when plunging into a new hobby, whether we remember them later or not.

The book is illustrated with photographs—most of them, regrettably, very small and poorly reproduced—and very attractive, impressionistic paintings of birds and birders afield. (The book's intended audience is unlikely to notice that the falcon hovering at the top of the front cover is not an American Kestrel.) Far better than anything I could ever do, Swick's sample field sketches both demonstrate the value of taking notes in the field and relieve the beginner of any anxieties she may have had about her own artistic attainments.

Birding for the Curious is not a book that will accompany readers through their entire birding careers. But it will inspire them to take the first step, without which there would be no career at all. ■

Rick Wright leads birding and birds and art tours for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours and is the author of the forthcoming *ABA Guide to Birds of Arizona*. You can follow his travels at birdaz.com/blog.



Nate Swick. *Birding for the Curious: The Easiest Way for Anyone to Explore the Incredible World of Birds*. Salem, MA: Page Street Publishing, 2015. Hardcover, 176 pages.

Available at our Nature Shops. \$19.99.



NON-PROFIT ORG
US POSTAGE PAID
TUCSON, AZ
PERMIT #1345

300 E University Blvd, #120
Tucson, AZ 85705

Address Service Requested

Vermilion Flycatcher

Volume 61, Number 1, January–March 2016

© 2016 Tucson Audubon Society

The *Vermilion Flycatcher* is the newsletter of the Tucson Audubon Society, a chapter of the National Audubon Society. National Audubon Society members and members of other chapters may receive the *Flycatcher* by joining the Friends of Tucson Audubon. See membership at tucsonaudubon.org.



TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY 
BIRDING *for the BIRDS*

BIRDATHON 2016 | APRIL 8–MAY 8



Sporting birders spotting birds in support of Tucson Audubon... that's the essence of **Birdathon**, a southeast Arizona tradition since 1987.

Stay tuned for details and fundraising tips in our weekly emails and on our website: tucsonaudubon.org/birdathon

Great Horned Owl, Rhett Herring; Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Tom Ryan; Lazuli Bunting, John Hoffman; Rufous-capped Warbler, Alan Schmierer; Olmsteads, Scott Olmstead



TUCSON AUDUBON'S *8th* ANNUAL GALA

An Evening for the Birds

Protecting Places for People and Wildlife

Saluting Saguaro National Park and the National Park Service Centennial

Tuesday, February 9th, 2016 · Hilton El Conquistador Resort

Live Birds | Mystery Wine Raffle | Silent Auction | Culinary Delights

Featuring Keynote Speaker Nancy Laney,
Chair, Board of Directors, Western National Parks Association

Tickets \$150; Sponsorship Opportunities Available

For more information visit tucsonaudubon.org/gala or
contact Bété Jones at bjones@tucsonaudubon.org or 520-209-1812

Artwork by Jay Pierstorff