

Vermilion

FLYCATCHER

October–December 2019 | Volume 64, Number 4

BIRDS &
COMMUNITY



MISSION

Tucson Audubon inspires people to enjoy and protect birds through recreation, education, conservation, and restoration of the environment upon which we all depend.

TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Mason Center
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Tucson, AZ 85742
Hours: Open most weekdays 9 am-5 pm or when chain is down

Paton Center for Hummingbirds

477 Pennsylvania Ave
Patagonia, AZ 85624
520-415-6447
Hours: Open sunrise to sunset

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Contents

- 02 Birds & Community Lecture Series
- 04 Many Hands Make Light Work: Community-sourced Conservation for Lucy’s Warblers
- 07 Birding Forecast: October through December
- 08 Community at Work
- 12 Habitat at Home: Community-Level Habitat Creation
- 14 Where We Work: Paton Center for Hummingbirds
- 16 Conservation in Action
- 18 Birds Benefit Business Alliance
- 20 Turn of Seasons – Fun and Social Birding in Southeast Arizona
- 22 Trips + Classes + Excursions
- 24 Community
- 26 Holiday Gift Guide
- 28 Scrutinize Those Scoters! Three-way Split for White-winged Could Produce a New Rarity
- 29 The Final Chirp



Discovering Birds & Community

I've taken notes in yellow legal pads since college—a habit that's continued through my Audubon career—and in a pad labeled "May to early June 2019" (sandwiched between a reminder to call the bank and directions to a Rose-throated Becard nest) I wrote the following:

**Tucson Audubon - adopt initiative mindset for existing projects and new ones.*

I recall we were planning to revive a Birds & Beer gathering in mid-June, and my notes reflect that the next series of Living With Nature membership meeting talks was on my mind ("LWN" appears repeatedly in the margins). As I look back at my notes from this period, I also keep seeing the word "community."

But who exactly is our community?

Tucson Audubon has been inspiring people to enjoy and protect birds for 70 years. While we're based in Tucson, our organization leads projects in Cochise, Pima, and Santa Cruz counties. Tucson Audubon also employs more than a dozen professionals who work on federal projects, extending our service area from southwest New Mexico and northward to the Tonto National Forest. Tucson Audubon's community, defined by our total geographic service area, encompasses all of Southeast Arizona (and a bit more).

Defining Tucson Audubon's community by programmatic reach provides a somewhat different view. We connect with hundreds of people who attend free, weekly bird walks at Sweetwater Wetlands Park, and we annually host 15,000 to 20,000 visitors at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds. Over 600 people registered for this year's Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, and 400 volunteers support Tucson Audubon's projects and programs throughout the year. For many years we have supported the work of conservation-minded bird and habitat advocates across the state. Our community includes avid birders and casual bird enthusiasts, permanent and seasonal residents, retirees, and working professionals.

And still, we are eager to include even more people in Tucson Audubon's community. In June, our staff began a conversation on equity, diversity, and inclusion—organizational values that are being recognized by non-profits nationwide as critical to our missions. How can we protect the biological treasures of Southeast Arizona without engaging every person possible?

Keeping all of that in mind, with this final *Vermilion Flycatcher* of 2019, I'm excited to introduce you to a developing new initiative we're calling **Birds & Community**. Our goal is to focus our programming such that we're

constantly designing and offering field trips, classes, and events for as many members of our Southeast Arizona community as possible, in addition to the thousands of visiting birders we engage annually. As we enter the home stretch of a year-long strategic planning effort, we'll be considering how we create strong connections to community members outside of Tucson and how we engage non-traditional audiences.

We are forever grateful to the members, donors, supporters, and partners who carry our mission close to their hearts. Our success in furthering Tucson Audubon for another 70 years—and being effective in adapting to an ever-changing environment—will require a deepening of these steadfast relationships, just as we are building new ones in the realms of environmental justice, creation of urban habitat, and the overlap of birds and art. I'm excited for what's ahead.

All Together, We Are Southeast Arizona.



Best regards,



Jonathan E. Lutz,
Executive Director

STRENGTHEN THE FLOCK!

You can impact the Tucson Audubon mission all year long!

Become a Frequent Flyer today! Provide Tucson Audubon with a guarantee of regular, predictable funding we can use to respond to conservation, advocacy, restoration, and education needs.

It's easy! Make a monthly gift to Tucson Audubon through your credit card or bank account. We'll send you an e-mail confirmation each month, and a year-end annual giving statement in the mail for your tax purposes. Your membership automatically renews, so you'll never miss an issue of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*!

Sandhill Cranes aren't the only frequent flyers bringing joy to Southeast Arizona.



TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/FREQUENTFLYERS

Keith Ashley, Development Director · 520-260-6994 · kashley@tucsonaudubon.org

TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY

BIRDS & COMMUNITY

LECTURE SERIES

Birds & Community is a brand-new Tucson Audubon initiative aimed at reaching new audiences while maintaining connections with traditional ones. Our annual Lecture Series, now a part of Birds & Community, will provide Tucson-area residents with a new perspective on the world of birds and the work of Tucson Audubon. Lectures are scheduled in a variety of locations (some new for 2019–2020) as a means of reaching as many community members as we can. Each date is an opportunity to meet face to face with fellow community members who share an interest in birds, or nature in general. Presentations, as always, remain open to the public and free of charge.

Adventures in Birding – Luke Safford

October 5, 2019, 10–11 am
Desert Hills Center,
2980 S. Camino del Sol, Green Valley

Adventures in Birding – Eric Scheuering

October 24, 2019, 6:30–7:30 pm
Oro Valley Community Center,
10555 N La Cañada Dr.

Birding offers a revolution in natural, cultural, and social experience. We are surrounded by feathered messengers in every hue of the rainbow, singing and flying. How can we help but take notice and really get to know them? Birding has become one of America's most-treasured pastimes and may well hold the keys to bird conservation. Welcome to Southeast Arizona, one of the world's birding hotspots. Where and how do you fit in?



Burrowing Owl, Dan Weisz



Butterfly, Jonathan E. Lutz

Creating a Wildlife and Pollinator Oasis with Native Plants – Carianne Campbell (Strategic Habitat Enhancements)

November 2, 2019, 10–11 am
Desert Hills Center,
2980 S. Camino del Sol, Green Valley

Do you enjoy watching the myriad of birds, butterflies, and other critters in your yard? You can make a big difference for wildlife and pollinators in your home landscape—even if you have a small yard or just a patio to work with! Native wildlife and pollinators prefer native plants, and you can choose from thousands in Southeast Arizona. We will review several native plant species that are appropriate for Green Valley yards and gardens, and discuss the wildlife they support.

Counting Birds for Conservation – Jennie MacFarland

December 7, 2019, 10–11 am
Desert Hills Center,
2980 S. Camino del Sol, Green Valley

Bird counts are the sturdy backbone of bird conservation. Without baseline knowledge of bird populations, it’s hard to know what’s happening. Which species are thriving, and which ones need our help? The Tucson Bird Count is the oldest urban bird census in the country. The Christmas Bird Count is the longest running. Understand the importance of these Community Science projects and how you can support them. Western Yellow-billed Cuckoos and Elegant Trogons are some of the birds you can count for conservation with Tucson Audubon.



Elegant Trogon, Bob Reese



Gray Hawk, Roger van Gelder

The Santa Cruz: A River of Birds – Tucson Audubon Staff

December 12, 2019
Tucson (Holiday Potluck, details on p. 24)

Take a virtual journey down Southeast Arizona’s iconic Santa Cruz River. It’s one of the few waterways in the world that runs south, then north, and the only river in the U.S. to cross an international border twice. The forests flanking the Santa Cruz once sheltered beavers and grizzly bears; today the river is a major migration corridor, supporting over 200 bird species including the rare Rose-throated Becard, Gray Hawk, and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Learn how the river is changing, and how to experience the bird community it supports.

Many Hands Mak *Community-sourced Conservat*



We live in an age of widespread crowdsourcing. Large numbers of people work collaboratively to create goods, provide services, and generate solutions for our greatest problems. For nonprofit organizations this often means engaging an entire community to help achieve a shared mission. It's far from a new concept for the Audubon movement.

More than 100 years ago people from around the country responded to Audubon Officer Frank Chapman's call to hold a Christmas Day Bird Census on December 25, 1900, giving birth to the annual Christmas Bird Count (CBC). (Read about our local CBCs on p. 21 of this magazine.)

Tucson Audubon has also engaged community support for science and conservation efforts over the years in many ways, including annual bird population surveys to determine trends among vulnerable species and the hands-on transformation of degraded landscapes into healthy habitat.

In the past year one of the most tangible and gratifying successes of Tucson Audubon community engagement is the Lucy's Warbler Nestbox Project. The project was inspired in 2014 by curious reports from community members that this tiny bird species was nesting in decorative bird houses and other human-crafted structures. Five years later and a Southeast Arizona social phenomenon is fully afoot: hundreds of people (from school kids to retirees) are contributing thousands of hours (at home, in the field, behind whirring table saws), leading to both scientific discoveries and the successful fledging of baby birds for a declining species.

The brief nesting and parenting season for Lucy's Warbler (March through June) has come and gone with the summer for 2019—and the Lucy's Warbler Project is now celebrating its most successful year yet. Here are a few of our community-created successes.



Lucy's Warbler, Joan Gellatly; Experiment point with all eight box designs in close proximity to determine which style is preferred by Lucy's Warblers.

The Light Work: Citizen Science for Lucy's Warblers



Olya Phillips,
Citizen Science Coordinator
ophillips@tucsonaudubon.org

2019 CONSERVATION IMPACT

Successful Nests: 76

Details of the following report are drawn from 720 boxes mounted at 60 points in three locations, each representing a slightly different habitat:

- **7B Ranch Trail** (a large mesquite bosque in Mammoth, prime habitat)
- **Tanque Verde Wash** (long, but thin stretches of mesquite along an urban wash in East Tucson)
- **Anza Trail in Tubac** (riparian area along the Santa Cruz River with running water year-round)

While other successful nests were happily reported in yards around Tucson, for consistency we are focusing this report on these experimental locations.

Estimated Fledglings: 304–380

We're typically not standing by the nestbox, clipboard in hand, when the nestlings learn to fly, but these estimates are based on 4 to 5 eggs hatching and most of the fledglings surviving.

2019 SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES

Preferred Nestbox Design: the triangle box

Using pictures and dimensions of artificial and natural Lucy's Warbler nest cavities, we designed eight different nestboxes varying in internal volume and overall style; 78% of the boxes used this year were the triangle design, a novel creation by Tucson Audubon that also revealed a 74% preference in 2018.

Nesting Proximity: just 3 inches!

While Lucy's Warblers are not communal nesters, their standard breeding territory in good habitat has been estimated to be just 98 feet—a relatively close nesting proximity compared with most species. This year our studies found them simultaneously nesting just three inches apart—evidence supporting our theory that a shortfall of cavities is a factor limiting the population and that provided with suitable nesting sites and plenty of food, they will utilize smaller spaces for successful breeding.

Preferred Nest Heights: 9 feet

We placed 300 boxes experimentally at heights of 1, 3, 5, 7, and 9 feet to learn about nesting preferences; 71% of the boxes used were at the 9-foot mark with the next most popular height being 21% at 7 feet.

Second Broods Documented: re-use of nests

We were able to confirm re-use of nests for a second brood in one season. In our most successful site, 7B Ranch Trail, we recorded 47 nesting attempts, some of which were second broods and some very close proximity, simultaneous nests.

(continues...)



Hungry Lucy's Warbler chicks in an active nest in a triangle style nestbox in urban Tucson, Paula Redinger; Author hanging one of the experimental nestbox designs, Dan Weisz; Hard working volunteers Deanna MacPhail and Robert Hergenrother installing the eight different nestbox designs in the two configurations at an experiment point in Tanque Verde Wash.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Tucson Audubon Staff, Volunteers, and Members

Ten staff and more than 50 volunteers have constructed, installed, and monitored hundreds of boxes this year.

Woodcrafters and Carpenters

Desert Woodcrafters Club lent their expertise to construct over 1,000 Lucy's Warbler nestboxes over several years; other local carpenters also donated time, energy, and skills.

Elementary School Teachers and Students

We held educational workshops at Ochoa and Manzo elementary schools, where almost 200 children were able to build their own Lucy's Warbler nestboxes and take them home.

University of Arizona Students

Students from the University of Arizona's School of Natural Resources & the Environment installed and monitored experimental nestboxes.

General Public

A total of 800 boxes were given away to the general public during **Tucson Meet Your Birds** and **Giving Tuesday Gives Back** events.

As our mesquite habitat, desert rivers, and migratory corridors in Southeast Arizona suffer the effects of climate change, combined with unchecked development and other destructive forces, our greatest hope for birds is the strength of our community to forge solutions. The Lucy's Warbler project is just one example of how many hands can make light work and achieve scientific insights and conservation successes for species of concern.



Jonathan Horst, Tucson Audubon's Director of Conservation and Research, helps young students build Lucy's Warbler triangle nestboxes that they could take home and install in their own yards, Luke Franke; Tucson Audubon gave back to the community for this past Giving Tuesday by giving away triangle nestboxes as multiple sites around Tucson. Here, Tucson Audubon's Executive Director shared nestboxes with the community at Whole Foods on Oracle Rd.; Experimental nestboxes; Lucy's Warbler, Jeremy Hayes



SCIENCE +
COMMUNITY +
CONSERVATION

*Lucy's Warbler
Nestbox Project*

Birding Forecast: October through December

Matt Griffiths,
Digital Media & Bird Conservation
mgriffiths@tucsonaudubon.org



It might seem silly to try to come up with a birding forecast for rare birds. On one hand, it's a little bold to tell people where to find a specific species at a certain time and place, especially if it's only an individual bird. On the other, birds do follow somewhat predictable patterns, often returning to the same area year after year, and you can increase your odds of finding them if you recognize these patterns. It does work sometimes, though may still be a great surprise when it happens. That's part of the fun of birding—you never know exactly what you're going to find!

October is a perfect time of year to put your research to the test. Of course, big changes come with the cooler fall weather. Our migrant breeding birds are gone, most shorebirds have already passed through, and ducks, hawks, and sparrows are back. But did you know that October also offers a great chance for finding migrant and vagrant species? Many "eastern" wood warblers occur casually in Southeast Arizona during fall migration and into winter, usually appearing along riparian corridors. Following is a list of some of these species and where you might find them.



American Redstart – An annual rarity in riparian woodlands and canyons, this warbler is likely to pop up in Sabino Canyon, Madera Canyon, or the Tubac area.

Black and White Warbler – This is one of the most regularly occurring eastern warblers in our region. They can be found along the Santa Cruz and San Pedro rivers and Tanque Verde Wash, up into mountain canyons such as Madera. One has been an annual winter resident at Sweetwater Wetlands for years now.

Black-throated Blue Warbler – This bird is fairly rare, but may stick around all winter, as individuals did along the Santa Cruz River near downtown Tucson in 2008 and out in the Santa Cruz flats in 2015.

Chestnut-sided Warbler – This warbler usually shows up in late summer and may spend the entire winter; the most likely spots are around Sweetwater Wetlands and in Tubac along the De Anza Trail.

Louisiana Waterthrush – This is the "expected" waterthrush in fall and winter, replacing the Northern's of the summer. Sabino Canyon, Patagonia Lake, and the San Pedro House have been reliable sites recently.

Palm Warbler – Tending to like wet areas in more open habitats, especially grasslands, Palm Warblers have been found at Arivaca Cienega, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, Avra Valley, and Green Valley.

Prothonotary Warbler – Look in the dense undergrowth for this strikingly yellow warbler. Locally, the areas around Sweetwater Wetlands and Sabino Canyon have been good. Also, check out Sonoita Creek, Patagonia, and along the De Anza Trail.

Tennessee Warbler – This bird is a casual to rare transient. Sweetwater and the Tubac area are good places to look. One spent a short time up in Summerhaven in 2018!



If these species aren't rare enough for you, keep your eyes out (and warbler-chip-detecting ears open!) for these other potential visitors: Ovenbird, and Golden-winged, Kentucky, Canada, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Blackpoll, and Black-throated Green Warblers. Press time note: Blue-winged and Blackpoll Warblers and Tropical Parula have turned up near Tucson!

Our Community



Cochise County

Our work in Cochise County revolves around the San Pedro River and the National Forest: San Pedro River celebrations and events, Lower San Pedro Collaborative, San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Friends of San Pedro, Community Watershed Coalition of Southern Arizona (Pima, Santa Cruz, Cochise), Yellow-billed Cuckoo surveys for Coronado National Forest in the Whetstone and Chiricahua mountains.

Sandhill Crane, Cathy Wasson

Homer M. Hansen

*President, Aplomado Environmental, LLC
Founder/President, Sulphur Springs Valley Young Birders Club
Chairman, Wings Over Willcox Birding & Nature Festival*

I have worked with Tucson Audubon for well over 20 years—participating in surveys, and giving presentations and workshops. Tucson Audubon has always had a strong conservation focus, and all these years I have watched them further conservation of birds and habitat across Southeast Arizona, including Cochise County. I have seen it personally, with past workshop participants becoming members, conducting surveys, or directly engaging in preservation efforts. I am very proud to support Tucson Audubon's educational programs and help put "boots on the ground." Conservation is a ceaseless job, but I am glad Tucson Audubon does not tire with its educational outreach efforts to inform our community and protect birds and our environment.



Patrick Dome, Karl Schmitt

Co-proprietors, Casa de San Pedro Bed & Breakfast

Tucson Audubon has helped our local community by bringing events such as the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival to Cochise County. We have been happy to host a couple of tours at Casa de San Pedro B&B, and we have also donated lodging to support various Tucson Audubon fundraising events. All of this helps introduce new people to the area.

Tucson Audubon has also donated a number of nest boxes to us and other local sites to help study the Lucy's Warbler. We share with Tucson Audubon the goals of protecting the environment, educating visitors about the area, introducing them to the many bird species, wildlife, and the importance of saving the critical habitat along the San Pedro River.

at Work

Tucson Audubon's community works on a variety of projects across Southeast Arizona in Pima, Santa Cruz, and Cochise Counties. Our mission to inspire people to enjoy and protect birds is fulfilled by staff, volunteers, members, donors, teachers, students, business owners, agency partners, and many more individuals for whom birds truly matter. Here are a few faces of our community sharing their stories.

Santa Cruz County

Our work in Santa Cruz County includes collaborations with The Nature Conservancy, Santa Cruz County Community Foundation, Bat Conservation International, Friends of Sonoita Creek, Historic Valle Verde Ranch, De Anza Trail Association, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, University of Arizona Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Tubac Community Center, Border Community Alliance, Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center, the Town of Patagonia, and others. The Paton Center for Hummingbirds is a major asset for Patagonia tourism.



Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Roger van Gelder



Kate Scott

Executive Director, Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center

Madrean Archipelago Wildlife Center's mission is to build pathways of compassionate coexistence between people and wildlife through environmental education, conservation, and wildlife rehabilitation. We collaborate with Tucson Audubon regarding the critical importance of protecting the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. We have teamed up for "Come & Talk San Pedro River" events at the Bisbee and Sierra Vista Farmers Markets, and together with my husband, Tony Heath, we created the *San Pedro Anthology*, a book of essays, photographs, and poetry compiled in appreciation of the River. The book includes an essay by author Barbara Kingsolver in which she writes, "For millions of migratory birds traveling from winter food in Central America to their northern breeding grounds, there is one reliable passage on which life depends. Just this one." The San Pedro River.

John Hughes

Volunteer Board Member, Friends of Sonoita Creek

Volunteer: Borderlands Network Greenhouses, Dirt Bags Trail Crew, Patagonia Lake State Park, USA National Phenology Network, Tucson Audubon's Paton Center for Hummingbirds

Having visited Wally and Marion Paton's yard off and on for over 20 years, and having had the pleasure of meeting Marion, my wife and I contributed financially to purchasing the property after the Patons passed away. Soon after, I started volunteering to help rehabilitate the property. I quickly realized how much I enjoy interacting with the great group of dedicated people who are the Tucson Audubon family. It has been a joy to watch the ever-changing landscape at the Paton Center made possible by the synergy of smart leaders, staff, generous donors, a great restoration crew, and many volunteers. Helping restore the new land acquisition into a functional riparian area along Sonoita Creek gives me a great deal of pleasure and fulfills a need we all share to give back and leave a place better than we found it.



Urban Tucson / Pima County

Tucson Audubon has built long-standing and valued partnerships with many organizations and businesses in Tucson and Pima County: Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, City of Tucson Parks and Rec, Manzo and Ochoa Elementaries, Changemaker High, numerous neighborhood HOAs, Tumamoc Hill, Pima County Office of Sustainability and Conservation, Freeport-Sierrita Mine, Buenos Aires NWR, Tucson Water, Pima County Flood Control, Saguaro National Park, Catalina State Park, Coronado National Forest, Green Valley Community Center, Green Valley Gardeners Club, Town of Marana, Santa Cruz Watershed Collaborative, and more!



Greater Roadrunner, Roger van Gelder



Erin Salano

Quail Technician—Tucson Audubon Staff on assignment with Fish and Wildlife Service: Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (Wildlife Conservation Student, University of Arizona)

I volunteered to install nest boxes for Lucy's warblers and helped introduce the project at elementary schools by building nestboxes with the children. I find it admirable that Tucson Audubon finds every possible way to engage the community in activities from bird surveys to building nestboxes. Tucson Audubon further shows its commitment to the community by funding positions such as the one I was lucky to hold at the Buenos Aires National Wildlife refuge, working with Masked Bobwhite quail. I am forever grateful for Tucson Audubon's continued efforts to promote education and contribute to science, while also supporting the efforts of others trying to do the same.

Kaitlyn Tyler

Tucson Audubon Intern on assignment with Friends of Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge (Biology Student, Cochise Community College)

I was part of the Masked Bobwhite reintroduction program at Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. Through the assistance and effort of Tucson Audubon, this project allows interns like me to be part of something huge, helping a critically endangered species. I assisted with releases, telemetry tracking, general care of the birds, as well as habitat restoration and work. I am extremely grateful to Tucson Audubon for allowing me to be a part of the team for the summer and I sincerely hope I am granted another opportunity to return, even if just volunteer work!



Masked Bobwhite, Xinyue Zhang



Carianne Campbell

Owner, Strategic Habitat Enhancements, LLC

On a hot morning and afternoon in June, 108 native plants and 80 plant cages were expertly installed near Kitt Peak. I love working with the professional restoration crew and volunteers at Tucson Audubon. Their attention to detail and a job well done has made all the difference at this tough restoration site, where the plants are now thriving and already providing excellent wildlife habitat. This approach is needed not only in the natural areas, but in the city, too! The crew is ready to find novel ways to bring wildness to our urban landscape with water harvesting and native plants.

Jessica McGarey

Wildlife Technician and Science Interpreter, Tucson Audubon and National Park Service's Sonoran Desert Network

I work for Tucson Audubon in collaboration with the National Park Service's Sonoran Desert Network. I set up motion- and temperature-activated wildlife cameras in national parks and monuments, a project that helps park managers learn how populations of mammals use the landscape. That knowledge enables staff to make good decisions about how to manage the wildlife in their park or monument.

I also assist with managing the Desert Research Learning Center, a facility in Tucson that promotes scientific understanding and conservation. We teach community members about desert ecosystems and sustainable practices, and how they can implement those practices at home. One of my favorite parts is working with student groups. The idea that I might inspire them to be more environmentally aware and possibly pursue careers in environmental fields gives me hope for the future.



Oscar Medina

Teacher and Ecological Restoration Manager, Changemaker High School

Partnering with the Tucson Audubon Society made me realize how a conservation organization can support the long-term career goals of students who are interested in habitat restoration and management. It is refreshing to know that organizations like Tucson Audubon Society are committed to issues of equity and social justice by showing up and working with underprivileged youth. Not only did they introduce birding and habitat restoration to our students, but also exposed our youth to career opportunities that can help them mitigate climate change in the community. The Swan Wash Park Rainwater Harvesting and Restoration Project is proof of the transformation that one can accomplish with organizations like Tucson Audubon Society.

Community-Level Habitat Creation

Kim Matsushino,
Habitat at Home Coordinator
kmatsushino@tucsonaudubon.org



The communities within Southeast Arizona are filled with beautifully diverse people, a cornucopia of habitats, and a myriad of wildlife. Over 500 bird species, the largest diversity of native bees in the world, countless numbers of butterfly and moth species, and thousands of plant species call Southeast Arizona home. With habitat loss on the rise, preserving this biodiversity depends on community involvement for creating pockets of habitat throughout the region. Every home owner and community member has a unique opportunity to provide food, water, shelter, and places for wildlife to raise their young with appropriate plant material and design. If we all designate even a small portion of our outdoor spaces to habitat restoration, we have the ability to mitigate biodiversity loss.

Tucson Audubon's Habitat at Home program includes over 130 stewards—individuals, businesses, organizations, and schools—who have transformed portions of their property into bird and wildlife friendly places.

Programs like Habitat at Home are only possible with support from its members. Please consider dedicating a portion of your outdoor space to benefit wildlife, and help spread the word in your community!

Here are a few community level habitats that provide resources for wildlife and serve as great publicly accessible examples of what we can accomplish. Visit them and get inspired to create your own!



TUCSON AUDUBON'S MASON CENTER, PATON CENTER FOR HUMMINGBIRDS, AND THE NATURE SHOP YARD

These Tucson Audubon locations showcase how to provide resources for birds and other wildlife with native plants, water features, bird feeders, and more. Each has walking and sitting areas for wildlife watching or quiet contemplation. The sites also feature examples of sustainability projects including water harvesting, solar power, composting, and fruit production. Stop by and learn more about Tucson Audubon's work!



ARIZONA MASTER GARDENERS DEMONSTRATION GARDENS, TUCSON

The demonstration gardens feature an array of plants and planting methods as well as various irrigation and composting systems. Their Wildlife Habitat is certified through both National Wildlife Federation and Habitat at Home. It features appropriate plants and hardscape elements that provide important habitat for birds and pollinators. The gardens may be self-toured any time during business hours or you can also arrange for a docent-led tour.



DESERT MEADOWS PARK, GREEN VALLEY

Desert Meadows Park sits on 4.2 acres in Green Valley. The garden is run solely by volunteers and serves as a community service project of the Green Valley Garden Club for the enjoyment of all residents and visitors. The park features community garden plots, covered picnic tables and benches, sculptures, swings, and many native plants that attract native wildlife.

Habitat at Home Plant Profile: Firecracker Penstemon

Lynn Hassler, Nature Shop Garden Volunteer Captain

Scientific name: *Penstemon eatonii*

Family: Plantaginaceae (Plantain)

Native range: Rocky slopes 2000–7000' in eastern California, southern Nevada, southern Utah, southwest Utah, southwest Colorado, northeast New Mexico, and Arizona

Wildlife value: Tubular flowers are a magnet for hummingbirds and are also visited by sulphur butterflies. Lizards, quail, verdins, and house finches all enjoy eating the sweet blossoms. Seeds are consumed by doves, quail, and ground squirrels.

Firecracker penstemon is a shrubby perennial that grows quickly into a small mound of dark green leaves about 1' high and 2' across. It's an excellent choice for the garden because it stays green all year long, unlike many other penstemon species that

die back following bloom. In late winter/spring, dense clusters of stunning crimson flowers appear on 1–2' stalks beckoning hummingbirds and other creatures as well. The narrow tubular flowers are ideally suited to the hummingbirds' long bills and tongues; it's difficult for bees and other insects to reach the nectar and pollen at the base of the floral tube, so hummers play a key role in the pollination process.

Plant in full sun with good drainage. Firecracker penstemon is hardy to 10 degrees and can survive on 10–12" of annual rainfall, but will look better (and not go dormant) if it receives some supplemental water during the dry summer. Plants may show their age after a few years, so collect and scatter seeds to encourage new plants and also to share with friends and neighbors.



Lynn Hassler



THE HISTORIC VALLE VERDE RANCH, TUBAC

This historic ranch in the Tubac Barrio, bordering the De Anza trail, was constructed in 1936 and has recently been restored to showcase its natural beauty. Kelley and Nancy Rivers have certified the ranch through Habitat at Home. The mature mesquite bosque on the property is extraordinary as such habitat is becoming increasingly rare.

TUCSON BOTANICAL GARDENS – BACKYARD BIRD HABITAT

Tucson Botanical Garden's Backyard Bird Habitat garden features native and non-native plants that provide birds and pollinators with places to forage, nest, and roost.

For more information visit tucsonaudubon.org/habitat or email us at habitat@tucsonaudubon.org.

Birding Ambassadors of the Paton Center

Tina Hall,
Paton Center Coordinator
thall@tucsonaudubon.org



While biodiversity and great birding are high on the list of things that make Southeast Arizona unique, it is also famous for its many snowbirds and retirees—extremely valuable resources for a robust volunteering community. The Paton Center for Hummingbirds is grateful to have dedicated volunteers, at least one for every day of the week, and several who are regular alternates. This crew keeps the Paton Center running, the birds healthy, and visitors happy.

Our volunteers make sure that every day we have clean feeders, suet, water, oranges, seed, and a friendly greeting for our guests—and we will likely exceed 16,000 visitors in 2019. Some of our volunteers are global birders. Others are more dedicated to the butterflies, flowering plants, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. Being a top naturalist is not a requirement. Some of the most fun and rewarding experiences occur when volunteers and guests work together to identify the birds they are seeing.

The Paton volunteers have backgrounds as varied as the birds they feed: school superintendent, landscaper, banking and finance, insurance, retail, scientist, and federal and state natural resource employees. As a group, they come together two to three times a year for field trips and social potlucks.

Do you enjoy sharing your love of birds and the natural world with others? You can find out more about becoming involved with the Paton Center for Hummingbirds by contacting Luke Safford at 520-209-1811 or lsafford@tucsonaudubon.org.

Tina Hall's last day as Coordinator for the Paton Center was September 10, 2019. In her 14-month tenure Tina helped to double the size of the Paton Center Volunteer corps, among other accomplishments. While she will always remain connected to the Paton Center, she has returned to the Midwest to be with family.

*Paton Bird Profile:***Lincoln's Sparrow***Keith Kamper, Paton Center Volunteer and Board Member*

With dazzling and multi-hued hummingbirds, tanagers, orioles, and grosbeaks conspicuous and vying for our attention, more subtly-plumaged birds often go unnoticed. This is especially true for the more furtive and retiring species that stay under cover much of the time. One such species that returns each year, trickling in during late September, and increasing in numbers as the weather cools, is the unassuming Lincoln's Sparrow. More difficult to see than the closely related Song Sparrow, it is well worth watching the brush piles in the yard for these typically ground-feeding birds, which seemingly materialize and come into the open. When they do, look closely. Their subtle and intricate beauty is striking.

Rusty edges on the tail and wings contrast with the overall brown, buffy, and gray colors of this medium-size sparrow. Smaller than the similar Song Sparrow, it is easily distinguished by several features. In addition to the smaller size, Lincoln's Sparrow has a rich buff color to the breast and sides (whitish in Song Sparrow) with very fine black streaks, and contrasting white belly. Song Sparrow has thick, lighter, blurry streaks on the breast. The difference is a bit like that of a Sharpie® marker and a crayon. Add in a buff moustache stripe, bordered by brown, a very thick gray eyebrow, buff eyering with a dark eyeline mark behind the eye, and there is nothing else like it at the Paton Center. The more diminutive and unstreaked Chipping Sparrows that winter here look nothing like this.



First described and collected by John James Audubon in 1833 in Labrador, this sparrow was named after his companion, Tom Lincoln. It breeds in the boreal and mountain regions of North America and in bogs and moist forest edges. Highly migratory, Lincoln's Sparrows winter in the southern United States, the Caribbean, Central America south to Panama, and there is even a record of it in Venezuela. With some diligence, you will be able to spot this subtle stunner as it returns once again to the Paton Center.

Lincoln's Sparrow, Calvin Kunin

**Kirk and Linda Stitt, Birding Ambassadors**

We retired in 2015 and spent much of the next year settling into a new home in Hereford. At that point, we wanted to do some volunteering, and since birding was a favorite hobby, we looked for those opportunities. Having enjoyed their backyard many times over the years, being a "birding ambassador" at Paton's made perfect sense—we've been there almost every Tuesday morning since! Filling the feeders is a good experience, but the biggest reward comes from interacting with the many guests from all over the country and the world. We have never had a negative experience when chatting with visitors. Many are not even birders. They just come to enjoy nature in a unique backyard setting. Another great benefit has been getting to know the community of Patagonia. This is a wonderful, friendly town, and it's easy to see why the Paton family settled here.

Community at Risk: Industrial Mining and Potential Impacts in Patagonia

The community of Patagonia has a long history of mining activity. Since the 1950s, though, the community of 900 residents has transformed into a destination for appreciation of the arts and nature. The Patagonia Creative Arts Association has anchored a small but thriving arts scene since 1999. In 2017, the community welcomed the opening of a new opera house. The eco-tourism destinations are well known: Patagonia Lake State Park, Sonoita Creek State Natural Area, The Nature Conservancy's Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, and, of course, Tucson Audubon's Paton Center for Hummingbirds. The Paton Center alone is slated to see record visitation in 2019—a projected 16,000 visitors. The economic impact of nature-based tourism to the region is over \$21 million annually.



Hermosa-Taylor Mine, Patagonia Mountains, Lee Pagni/Lighthawk

As enormous trucks, 14-feet tall, rumble through the quaint business district and mining-related noise increases in the nearby mountains, the question on our minds is: what does the future hold for Patagonia?

If all of the plans of lead entities like Australia-based mining company, South 32, are fulfilled, the scale of mineral extraction in the Patagonia Mountains will be unlike anything the town has ever experienced. Concerns over the potential consequences that industrial-scale mining will have on water resources have been well-chronicled by the local activist group, the Patagonia Area Resource Alliance (PARA). The Patagonia Mountains are made up of fractured bedrock, which complicates the mapping of water supply and movement, but the Preliminary Economic Assessment for the Hermosa-Taylor Mine, now owned by Australian BHP spin-off South 32, estimates water use at 650 gallons of water per minute, and pumping 24/7.

Unlike the Rosemont Mine that's proposed to extract mineral resources from the neighboring Santa Rita Mountains, mining activity has already begun in the Patagonias. Tucson Audubon encourages you to engage with this issue the next time you visit the Paton Center, advocating either in person or online. While in Patagonia, make it known that you're a birder and express what you appreciate about the area; when engaging organizations and individuals on social media, be sure to speak up for the biodiversity that makes the Patagonia area special. To stay abreast of this issue and learn more about mining in Patagonia, please sign up for or continue to follow Conservation Alerts from Tucson Audubon.

Being an Advocate 101: Writing an Effective Public Comment Letter

These pop up in your email all the time—Write to the EPA, save this bird! Please submit your comments on this action! We need your comments today!

So what makes an effective comment letter?

DO: Personalize your comments. Identify yourself and list any qualifications you bring to this issue.

DO: Use examples. If you have a personal story, share it; use science and cite your sources; borrow inspiration from local experts and news reports.

DO: Use a clear position statement and suggest a clear outcome. Group comments or organization statements can offer great examples. Borrow and adapt.

DO NOT: Simply copy and send a form letter word for word. These are not counted as individual comments.

DO NOT: State vague positions. Public comment periods are not a vote.

Advocacy Updates

Rosemont Mine on Hold

This July, Federal Judge James Soto rejected the Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed Rosemont Copper Mine, thus sending the process back to the U.S. Forest Service. Appeal is expected, but nonetheless a huge victory.

Permit Re-issued for Proposed Megadevelopment along San Pedro

In August, the Army Corps of Engineers re-issued a permit for the proposed megadevelopment, the Villages at Vigneto in Benson, AZ. Tucson Audubon will continue to press for the completion of a full Environmental Impact Statement, for accounting of all impacts to the San Pedro River and joining continued legal action.

Bulldozing the Border

Arizona has become another center point for construction of additional segments of border wall across such sensitive areas as San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge, the San Pedro River, and Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. Tucson Audubon joined other concerned environmental groups in protesting the continued use of federal waivers to avoid all environmental assessment of these devastating projects.



Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, one of the many endangered species threatened by the proposed Rosemont Mine and mining in the Patagonia Mountains, Alan Schmierer

Talking Birds and the Economy with Legislative Team

In conjunction with the 2019 Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, Sonoran Joint Venture (SJV) and partners, including Tucson Audubon, took representatives from the offices of both Senator McSally and Senator Sinema to visit the Paton Center for Hummingbirds in Patagonia, AZ, to do some birding, discuss the economic impact of bird and wildlife watching, and other regional issues.



From left to right, at the Paton Center: Nicole Gillett, Tucson Audubon; Chase Kassel, Legislative Liaison for Senator McSally; Sonia Perillo, Audubon Arizona; Troy Kimball, Constituent Affairs Representative for Senator Sinema; Adam Hannuksela, Sonoran Joint Venture; Francisco Abarca, AZ Game and Fish; Emily Clark, Sonoran Joint Venture

Vocabulary and Terms

Rosemont Mine: A proposed open pit mine in the Santa Rita Mountains owned by HudBay Minerals.

Villages at Vigneto: Proposed development in Benson, AZ, that has never completed a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

The Army Corps of Engineers: Agency in charge of reviewing Clean Water Act Section 404 Permits.

The San Pedro River: The last free-flowing river in the Southwest and major migration corridor.

Environmental Impact Statement: An EIS is required under the National Environmental Policy Act for actions with the possibility of affecting our environment.

Federal Waivers: Under the REAL ID Act of 2005, the Secretary of Homeland Security can waive any regulations as needed. For the border wall, regulations including the Endangered Species Act, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and Clean Water Act have all been waived for construction.

Welcome to Splendido at Rancho Vistoso, the Premiere sponsor of our Volunteer program

Birders and Others Are Aging Well at Splendido

Nancy Boyle, Community Relations Manager, Splendido at Rancho Vistoso, nboyle@splendidotucson.com

Good news for Audubon Society members—it turns out that birdwatching offers a flock of benefits for aging well. And, luckily for Tucsonans, we live in an area where birdwatching can be as simple as looking around your property to see everything from Anna’s Hummingbirds to Gila Woodpeckers.

That’s the case at Splendido, an all-inclusive community for those 55 and better in Oro Valley. Splendido is a Life Plan Community that combines spacious Terrace and Villa Homes and resort-like amenities with investment protection and health care options, so residents can relax and enjoy the assurance that comes from knowing there’s a plan in place for the future. All this, plus great birdwatching.



“I counted 10 or 12 species of birds at Splendido in June,” says resident Phoebe Olmsted. “Right now, we’re all intrigued with the Vermilion Flycatchers. We have one that’s nesting here. It’s just gorgeous! The Gambel’s Quail have hatched and the chicks

are running everywhere, and the hiking club often sees two Great Horned Owls in Honeybee Canyon, which is adjacent to Splendido.”

Phoebe is a lifelong birder—she joined the Audubon Society of Dartmouth College at age six—as well as a former falconer and raptor rehabilitator and an accomplished nature photographer. She was instrumental in getting the Madera Garden at Splendido certified as a wildlife habitat by the National Wildlife Refuge.

Benefits of Birdwatching

Like Phoebe, many Tucsonans are passionate birdwatchers, and research shows that the hobby is good for their mental and physical health. In fact, just being around birds makes us less likely to experience depression, anxiety, and stress, according to a study conducted in a neighborhood in southern England. The researchers found a positive association between the number of birds people see daily and their mental health.

Another study identified bird songs and calls as the most restorative natural sound for stress and attention fatigue.

Those benefits are enjoyed by anyone who notices birds; more serious birdwatchers are also getting a cognitive workout, as they work to identify species by sight, sound, and/or research. This helps keep memory and problem-solving skills sharp. And, of course, they are getting at least a mild physical workout by traveling to where birds are found.

It’s no coincidence that Splendido is the Birds Benefit Business Alliance Premiere sponsor of Tucson Audubon’s volunteer program; with Splendido’s location and nature-loving population, the relationship is... well, a natural.

Birding Travel from our Business Partners

Solipaso Tours solipaso.com

MONARCH BUTTERFLIES AND BIRDS

Dates: February 9–16, 2020

Price: \$3,050

Leader: David MacKay

Over 20 million monarch butterflies make their amazing migration of more than 2,000 miles from Canada to a small area in the mountains of Michoacan and the Estado de Mexico. It’s a marvel of nature that is not to be missed! In addition, we’ll visit the Lerma marshes, where we seek the beautiful Black-pollled Yellowthroat, then make our way to Valle del Bravo and Lake Patzcuaro.



Monarch Butterfly, Dan Weisz



**BIRDS
BENEFIT
BUSINESS**
Alliance

Many thanks to our Birds Benefit Business Alliance Members, who show their support for Tucson Audubon's mission through annual contributions and in-kind donations.

For more information about their businesses, including links to websites, visit tucsonaudubon.org/alliance.

PREMIERE (\$5,000+)

Carl Zeiss Sports Optics
Splendido at Rancho Vistoso
Tucson Electric Power

LEADING (\$2,500)

Birdwatcher's Digest
Cornell Lab of Ornithology
Swarovski Optik
Tamron USA

SUSTAINING (\$1,000)

Alexander | Carrillo Consulting
Beaumont & Port Arthur Convention and Visitors Bureau
Birding Ecotours
Crown Community Development-Arizona & Farmers Investment Co.
Diet of Hope Institute
Dr. Miguel A. Arenas, MD
Green Valley Pecan Company
Hatfield CPA LLC
Historic Y
Kimberlyn Drew, Realtor
Originate Natural Building Materials Showroom
Sabrewing Nature Tours
Vortex Optics

SUPPORTING (\$750)

Solipaso Tours / El Pedregal Nature Lodge

CONTRIBUTING (\$500)

Adventure Birding Company
AZ Birder Casitas
Bed and Bagels of Tucson
Desert Harrier
Visit Tucson
WINGS Birding Tours Worldwide



SAVE THE DATES!

AUGUST 5-9, 2020

Celebrate 10 years of finding life birds in Southeast Arizona!



Anna's Hummingbird, Lisa Langell



Montezuma Quail, Frank Retes



Field trip, Tom Richardson

Featured speakers
Alvaro Jaramillo and
Tom Stephenson

Bird, photography, and wildlife
workshops and presentations,
vendor fair, and **FREE**
Community Nature Expo

Day trips and
overnight excursions
to Southeast Arizona's
best birding sites

Registration opens April 1, 2020

TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/FESTIVAL2020

Turn of Seasons – Fun and Social Birding in Southeast Arizona

Jennie MacFarland,
Bird Conservation Biologist
jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org



Bird survey volunteers watch for IUCN Red Listed Chestnut-collared Longspurs to come to this cattle tank for a drink in San Rafael Grassland Global Important Bird Area. This imperiled species winters in Chihuahuan grassland habitat in Southeast Arizona, New Mexico, Texas and northern Mexico and surveys such as this one show their population is in steep decline. Photo by Jennie MacFarland

The summer monsoon season is iconic of Southeast Arizona, and late summer rains create a “second spring” of abundance. The landscape that was recently greened by heavy rains will soon give way to the golden browns and vivid leaf colors of autumn. As the summer bird community swells to include fall migrating birds that pass through or stop over in our region, so too does our human community of birders grow, with the return of winter residents.

Autumn birding can be very exciting, but is sometimes under-appreciated. Many of the banner birds of the monsoon season, such as Varied Bunting and Elegant Trogon, are still present in October, though in smaller numbers than during summer. There is also the visible phenomenon of interrupted molt migration. Certain species, such as Lazuli Bunting, Western Kingbird, Chipping Sparrow, Western Tanager, and Warbling Vireo, halt their migration for a month or more to congregate in the sky islands of Southeast Arizona and northwest Mexico. They are taking advantage of the food abundance produced by late summer rains. They rest up and undergo a plumage upgrade before continuing on their southward journeys.

The spectacle of fall migration, mixed with the presence of lingering summer residents and molt migrants, then gives way to winter residents. As the days grow shorter, Southeast Arizona birders think about rounding up their woolly hats, gloves, and winter coats. November and December host a new community of birds that choose Southeast Arizona as their wintering grounds. Winter brings different bird identification challenges, as a new cast of sparrows and hawks arrives. Luckily, there are entire

books devoted to these difficult groups; now is the time to find them in your library and give them a quick dusting off.

As our community of bird species shifts for the winter, birding locations also change. Many of us return to reviewing notes and maps on exactly how to navigate the Santa Cruz Flats, the agricultural area between Marana and Casa Grande. This area, which has fewer birds in the summer and is consequently under-birded, suddenly becomes a wonderland of Horned Larks and American Pipits, with an abundance of raptor species and clouds of blackbirds. Finding a flock of critically declining Mountain Plovers among the lush green turf fields growing there can be very rewarding, as the species is Near Threatened on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. It helps to have a spotting scope to see them. If you haven’t been using your scope during the summer months, now is the time to pop it into the trunk of your car.

The scope will also come in handy if you visit any of Southeast Arizona’s grassland habitats. Both the Las Cienegas Global Important Bird Area (IBA) and the San Rafael Grasslands Global IBA are first-rate destinations for practicing your sparrow identification skills. The grasslands are important wintering habitats for Baird’s Sparrow and flocks of Chestnut-collared Longspur, both of which are critically declining.

Driving through the grasslands or around the Santa Cruz Flats can yield a rewarding day of birding. The strategy of riding in the car with the heater cranked up, jumping out to admire birds, then

Southeast Arizona Christmas Bird Counts

Contact the compiler, join a team, and have fun!

SANTA CATALINA MOUNTAINS: DECEMBER 14

The count circle encompasses Tanque Verde Creek, Summerhaven, Sabino and Ventana Canyons, and Redington Pass. Everyone can contribute, whether you want to hike a remote mountain trail or count birds in the comfort of your own back yard! Kendall Kroesen and Holly Kleindienst will be co-compiling this year. Contact Kendall at kkroesen@cox.net, 520-971-2385.

TUCSON VALLEY: DECEMBER 17

The Tucson Valley Christmas Bird Count will celebrate its 48th year in 2019! The count always ends with a fun-filled evening at the “Countdown Potluck” where stories are shared, rarities are reported, and new birding friends are made. If you would like to join in on this collaborative citizen-science adventure please contact compiler, Luke Safford, at saffordluke@gmail.com.

AJO-CABEZA PRIETA, DECEMBER 14

Stephanie Doerries, stephanie_doerries@fws.gov

NOGALES, DECEMBER 14

Alan Schmierer, aaschmierer@yahoo.com

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NM, DECEMBER 15

Daniel Martin, daniel_j_martin@nps.gov

RAMSEY CANYON, DECEMBER 15

Ken Blankenship, kenblankenshipbirding@gmail.com

LUKEVILLE, DECEMBER 16

Daniel Martin, daniel_j_martin@nps.gov

PATAGONIA, DECEMBER 19

Patsy Vanden Berge, pvndnbr5@gmail.com

ST. DAVID, DECEMBER 20

Heather Swanson, SPRNCAbird@hotmail.com

ATASCOSA HIGHLANDS, DECEMBER 21

John Yerger, john@adventurebirding.com

GREEN VALLEY-MADERA CANYON, DECEMBER 28

Malcolm Chesworth, malcolmsc@gmail.com

PORTAL, DECEMBER 28

Jackie Lewis, winjac12@vtc.net

APPLETON-WHITTELL, JANUARY 3

Suzanne Wilcox, Suzanne.Wilcox@audubon.org

DUDLEYVILLE, JANUARY 4

Doug Jenness, d_jenness@hotmail.com

BUENOS-AIRES NWR, TBD

Bonnie Swarbrick, bonnie.swarbrick@gmail.com

Find the complete list of Arizona Christmas bird counts at tucsonaudubon.org/cbc.

returning to the warmth of the car and chatting about field marks and interesting behaviors makes for a fun and socially rewarding day. Invite a novice birder along or an interested young person.

During the winter months there are also many organized birding efforts to get people out to census bird populations. Every January, the Arizona Field Ornithologists organize a one-day raptor count of the Santa Cruz Flats—as many as 15 species can be seen in a single day. Tucson Audubon organizes several bird surveys with an emphasis on Chestnut-collared Longspurs in Las Cienegas and the San Rafael Grasslands. These surveys require both experienced birders with advanced identification skills, as well as less experienced birders (they are often the best spotters!). There are many excellent Christmas Bird Count (CBC) circles that need help for surveys in December and January. Several counts can always use more participants; notably the Nogales CBC and the Atascosa Highlands CBC, both of which have turned up amazing rarities in the past.

Winter is when Southeast Arizona’s birding community escalates in size. It’s an excellent time for both social birding and for conservation science. Many amazing bird encounters await, and there are new friendships to be forged.



A winter plumage Chestnut-collared Longspur pauses to take a drink. Tucson Audubon has been monitoring these birds in two Global IBAs since 2011. Photo by Alan Schmierer

References for this article may be found at tucsonaudubon.org/references.

What is Birding?

Well, that depends on whom you're asking. It's different for everyone! For many people, birding means connecting with other people through birds. With the launch of our Birds & Community Lecture Series (formerly Living With Nature) we want to provide an opportunity for people to engage with other people in the community and connect with the organization at a face-to-face level.



Birders at the Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, Tom Brown

Eric Scheuering,
Education Programs Manager
escheuering@tucsonaudubon.org



Similarly, one of the goals of our Education programs is to create more inclusive birding events and in doing so, promoting diversity in birding. This includes our new Field Trips listed below that focus on beginning birding at easily accessible sites. One of the benefits of living in bird-rich Southeast Arizona is that we don't need to go far to find great birds—they're all around us, including our backyards, urban parks, and greenspaces. So come join us at these programs. And invite someone along who is new to birding. All bird appreciators are welcome!

Classes

Beginning Birding

Sundays, October 27 and November 3

Interested in meeting your local birds? Join us for an introduction to bird-watching and get to know the common birds you'll find in and around Tucson. In this classroom and field-based workshop, participants will learn techniques for identification, including recognizing birds by size and shape, behavior, plumage, and habitat. We'll also practice using binoculars and field guides.

INSTRUCTOR: Eric Scheuering

FEE: Tucson Audubon Members \$75; Non-members \$110

Sparrow Identification Workshop

Thursday, January 30 and Saturday, February 1

INSTRUCTOR: Homer Hansen

FEE: Tucson Audubon Members \$125; Non-members \$160

Raptor Identification Workshop

Thursday, February 6 and Saturday, February 8

INSTRUCTOR: Homer Hansen

FEE: Tucson Audubon Members \$125; Non-members \$160

See tucsonaudubon.org/education for additional classes, and to register.

Birding Excursions

Bosque del Apache, New Mexico

December 5–8, 2019

Experience the spectacle of flocks of tens of thousands of wintering geese, ducks, cranes, as well as raptors including Ferruginous Hawks, Golden and Bald Eagles, Prairie Falcons, and Merlins. A visit at dusk will provide a chance to see Sandhill Cranes spiraling in to roost in the shallow wetlands. We'll also explore cottonwood riparian forests and areas of Chihuahuan Desert scrub, where we'll look for Scaled Quail, Red-naped Sapsucker, Woodhouse's Scrub-Jay, Juniper Titmouse, and all three bluebirds.

LEADERS: Luke Safford and Eric Scheuering

FEE: Tucson Audubon Members \$750; Non-members \$950

Visit tucsonaudubon.org/excursions to register.



Ferruginous Hawk, Rhett Herring



Bosque del Apache, Cathy Wasson

Field Trips

Meet your birds at one of these new free trips with a focus on beginning birding at easily accessible local sites. No birding experience required and no registration necessary—all bird appreciators welcome! *Binoculars available for use.*

Atturbury Wash

This lush desert wash set in Sonoran desert scrub with many mature mesquite and palo verde trees and a wide trail winding through it is home to many resident bird species. We'll explore the main trail and other paths that lead into open desert habitats. Approximately 1.5 hours.

Tuesdays: October 1 (7 am), November 5 (8 am), December 3 (8 am)

Meet at the parking lot at Lower Lincoln Park, 8280 E Escalante Road

University of Arizona Campus

This urban campus, encompassing approximately 400 acres of landscaped spaces, contains the boundaries of the Campus Arboretum. This unique collection of plants from arid and semi-arid climates around the world provides habitat for over 100 species of birds throughout the year and we'll explore different areas of campus looking for them. Approximately 1.5 hours.

Saturdays: October 12 (7 am), November 9 (8 am), December 14 (8 am)

Meet at the University of Arizona Main Gate at University and Park

Kino Environmental Restoration Project at Sam Lena Park (KERP)

A large flood-containment basin surrounded by dense palo verde, mesquite, creosote, and desert broom, KERP is a habitat restoration project. The large basins provide open water habitat for a number of waterbirds and shorebirds rarely encountered in the urban area. We'll walk the paved path surrounding the basins and look for a variety of birds.

Tuesdays: October 8 (7 am), November 12 (8 am), December 10 (8 am)

Meet at the ramadas adjacent to the ballfields, 3400 S Country Club Road

Santa Cruz River Heritage Project

Tucson Water has started adding recycled water daily to the Santa Cruz River at a point south of downtown near the heart of the city. This added water will bring perennial flow to this portion of the river, and with it, vegetation and wildlife. We'll explore this area along The Loop path to observe the changes to the landscape and the birds it attracts.

Tuesdays: October 15 (7 am), November 21 (8 am), December 19 (8 am)

Meet at Paseo de las Iglesias parking lot on west side of river at W Silverlake and S Cottonwood

And check out these other community-focused field trips! They're free and open to all with no registration necessary.

Sweetwater Wetlands

Every Wednesday, October (7 am),

November–February (8 am)

Mission Garden

2nd Thursday of the month, 8 am

Mason Center/Arthur Pack Park

November 2 & 16, December 7 & 21, 8 am

Fort Lowell Park

Sunday, October 27, 7 am

Meet at the parking lot at the main entrance off Craycroft, in front of the pool.

Reid Park Ramble

Tuesday, November 19, 10:30 am. Meet at the bus stop in front of the Edith Ball Adaptive Recreation Center (which looks like a big white circus tent).

See tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips for more info and to register for other trips.

National Audubon Society Recognizes Ruth Russell for Decades of Advocacy

Tucson Audubon is proud to announce that Ruth Russell received the Charles H. Callison Volunteer Award in July at the National Audubon Convention in Milwaukee. Each year the National Audubon Society honors a volunteer's outstanding efforts and contributions to protecting birds and the places they need.

"Ruth is a leader at all levels of Audubon, be it her chapter work or her work at the state and national levels. Even more than that, she is a relentless advocate for birds and their habitats," said Audubon Arizona Executive Director Sonia Perillo who co-nominated Russell for the award.

"Receiving this award is a most humbling experience," said Russell. "I am honored to join the list of past honorees. So much of Audubon's accomplishments are due to volunteers in Chapters all across the country. Tucson Audubon Society is one of the most active Chapters, and much of what I may be credited with is due to members working together over the years."

To me, Audubon has always been about people, joined in efforts to protect birds and their habitats. My time with Audubon has been and continues to be an important part of my life—I feel fortunate to be a part of a nationwide team working to protect the environment we share with all living creatures."

Ruth has served repeatedly as a board member for Tucson Audubon Society, beginning in the 1970s, and recently completed her latest term. She helped establish the Arizona Council of Chapters, working to bring all of Arizona's Audubon chapters

together. She later helped lead the formation of the Audubon Arizona office, and she has been instrumental in nearly every aspect of Audubon's conservation success in Arizona and beyond.

"Ruth Russell exemplifies the volunteer leadership that I've been fortunate to observe and benefit from during my time serving Audubon organizations," explained Tucson Audubon Society Executive Director, Jonathan Lutz. "Her positive influence is felt throughout our organization—from board business to Birdathon. Ruth reminds us every day that birds are at the heart of the work we do, and she inspires our staff and volunteers to share the world of birds with all members of the communities we serve."

Congratulations, Ruth!



Leigh Altadonna, David Yarnold, Ruth Russell, Kenn Kaufman, Sonia Perillo, Jonathan Lutz; Photo by Camilla Cerea

Celebrate Birds at the Members' Holiday Potluck

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12, 6 pm
St. Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church

THE SANTA CRUZ: A RIVER OF BIRDS

with Tucson Audubon Staff

We welcome all members to join staff for an evening of fellowship, conversation, and a spotlight on the Santa Cruz River. This event is FREE for Tucson Audubon Society members. Please RSVP online via tucsonaudubon.org/calendar, or call 520-629-0510 x7002.

Gifts in Honor or Memory Of

In honor of Olya Phillips from Doris & Larry Abrams

In honor of Ann-Marie Pendl from Edward Booth

In honor of Paula & Harold Ables from Nancy Bowen

In honor of Kathleen Roach from Denise Hammett

In honor of Jonathan Horst from Ruth Ann & Reuben Horst

In honor of Kathleen Roach from June Hunter

In memory of Robert C. Kray from Robert Kray

In honor of Kathleen Roach from Kristel Scott

In memory of Janet Sutfin from Charles Sutfin

Bringing Communities Together Through Volunteering

Many of us who volunteer as individuals are looking to become part of the larger community of Tucson Audubon. But have you ever considered the possibility of something a bit different? How about engaging the other communities you are already part of with a Tucson Audubon volunteer opportunity? These other groups of people could be your workplace, your church, your school, your neighbors—and we can certainly accommodate larger groups like these, especially in our habitat restoration work. Think about the possibilities, and imagine your friends and co-workers getting excited about environmental and conservation work along with you. It may be the perfect way to increase our capacity, become more diverse, and strengthen our community.

In August, Intuit, a business and financial software company, partnered with us by sending 17 employees to volunteer in Patagonia near the Paton Center for Hummingbirds. Along with our restoration staff they planted native grasses, removed invasive plants, and started work on a new trail system (photos below).



In September we'll be partnering with groups from the University of Arizona to plant agaves at Sweetwater Wetlands and more restoration projects. Again—imagine the groups you are already part of becoming involved!

Wondering how to get involved? Here is a quick three-step process:

1. Email Luke at lsafford@tucsonaudubon.org and tell him you have a group ready to serve.
2. Determine the number of volunteers, open and available projects, and timing.
3. Set the date and volunteer!

If you would like to learn more about current volunteer opportunities and start volunteering with Tucson Audubon, please email Luke Safford at lsafford@tucsonaudubon.org.



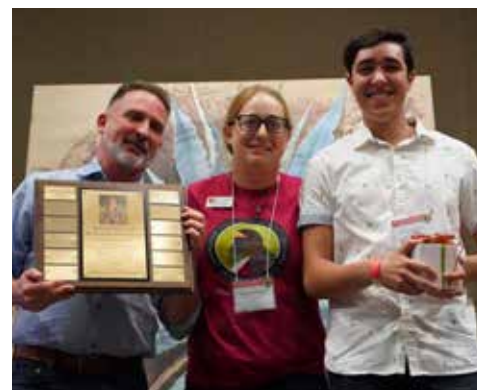
Congratulations to Dorian Escalante!

At the recent Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, Tucson Audubon awarded Dorian Escalante with the first **Bill Thompson III Youth Award** in memory of our recently departed friend. The award recognizes contributions of an outstanding Southeast Arizona youth with a demonstrated commitment to birds and habitat through art, conservation action, science, or recreation.

An excellent birder and bird artist, Dorian has been actively engaged with the Tucson Audubon community since 2014, participating in surveys, supporting youth education, volunteering at the Paton Center

for Hummingbirds, and inspiring us with his energy, insight, and passion for birds.

The award carries with it a \$1,000 scholarship to be put toward furthering Dorian's education and experiences related to birds. Funds for the award were raised through a raffle held at the Birding Festival with generous contributions from many vendors. We would especially like to thank donations of binoculars from **Carl Zeiss Sports Optics** and **Vortex Optics**. Dorian will also receive a pair of Zeiss binoculars donated to him as part of the award from **Birdwatcher's Digest**.



Dorian (right) is congratulated by Keith Ashley and Jennie MacFarland

Now in his senior year at Cienega High School, Dorian continues to help Tucson Audubon fulfill our mission by inspiring others to enjoy and protect birds.

TUCSON AUDUBON NATURE SHOP

HOLIDAY GIFT GUIDE

Building Community Through the Nature Shop

The Nature Shop is often the first point of contact for people unfamiliar with the organization or new to the area. People who stop in to check out our terrific selection of merchandise also learn about the vital work that Tucson Audubon is doing to protect birds and their habitat in Southeast Arizona. The Nature Shops help to expand our birding and conservation community by creating a resource hub of information while making it easy to support the Tucson Audubon Society with every purchase.

Make the Nature Shop your first stop for holiday and everyday shopping or come in to learn more about the Tucson Audubon Society's programs and ways to be part of our growing community.

SEASONAL



Diana Madaras Glass Ornament
\$12.95



Fall Votive Set \$9.00



Handpainted Ornaments
\$16.00

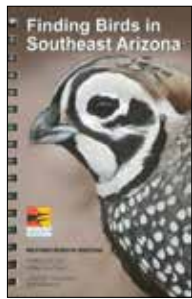


Joy to the World
Mug \$12.00



Winter Owl Holiday
Cards \$10.99

BIRDING ESSENTIALS



\$24.95



Green Trails Maps
\$14.00



Rick Young Ultra Light
Bino Harness \$24.95



Rite in the Rain
4x6 \$5.95

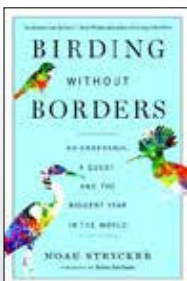


Packseat by
GCI Outdoor \$25.00



Sunday Afternoons Ultra
Adventure Hat \$42.00

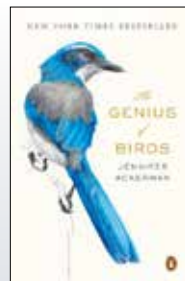
BOOKS



\$15.99



\$60.00



\$17.00



\$24.95



\$39.95



\$22.50

For more shop items, visit tucsonaudubon.org/nature-shop

Main Nature Shop · 300 E University Blvd #120 · 520-629-0510

Monday-Friday, 10 am-4 pm; Saturday, 10 am-2 pm

Agua Caliente Park · 12325 E Roger Rd · 520-760-7881

The Nature Shop at Agua Caliente Park is currently closed until further notice due to Shop and Park renovations.

GIFTS FOR NATURE LOVERS



Jabebo Earrings
\$13.95



Eco Caps
\$18.00-20.00



Hummingbird
Rain Chain
\$64.00



Art Pole
\$55.00



Saguaro Wine Bottle
Stopper
\$10.00



Wild Bryde Earrings
\$13.00-39.00

OPTICS



Celestron Nature DX 8x32
Non-Member \$133.95
Member \$119.95



Kowa Prominar Compact
Spotting Scope
Non-Member \$1999.00
Member \$1799.00



Leica Noctivid 10x42
Non-Member \$3110.00
Member \$2799.00



Swarovski EL 8.5x42
Non-Member \$2954.00
Member \$2659.00



Vortex Viper 10x42
Non-Member \$649.99
Member \$499.99



Zeiss Conquest 8x32
Non-Member \$1033.99
Member \$929.99

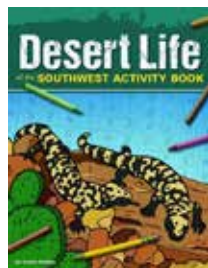
KIDS' CORNER



Audubon Birds
\$9.95



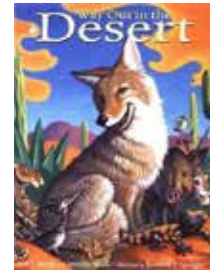
Birding is My Favorite
Video Game \$12.99



Desert Life Activity Book by
Karen Krebs \$6.95



Poop Tracks Game
\$9.99



Way Out in the Desert
\$15.95



Western Diamondback Plush
\$14.99

2019 Annual Holiday Sale

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30 THROUGH SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

20% off everything in the Nature Shops for Tucson Audubon members and 10% off for non-members.

Sale includes optics, plus no tax ever!

SHOP
LOCALLY!

Scrutinize Those Scoters!

Three-way Split for White-winged Could Produce a New Rarity

Chris Benesh

As I sit in my air-conditioned room avoiding the summer heat of Tucson, what better time to reflect on recent changes to the American Ornithological Society's Checklist of North American Birds? Most apparent to Arizona birders is, of course, the adoption of the name Blue-throated Mountain-gem to replace Blue-throated Hummingbird. With this change, and that of the Mexican species Amethyst-throated, all of the *Lampornis* hummingbirds are now known as mountain-gems.

But that is not what I want to write about. My mind is on ducks, specifically the three-way split of White-winged Scoter. For those who haven't read up on this elsewhere, the North American Classification Committee of the American Ornithological Society has determined that the various populations constitute three species. The widespread form breeding in the Nearctic is the familiar brown-flanked one that retains the common name White-winged Scoter, but now sports a new specific epithet, *deglandi*. Birds in the western Palearctic are now known as Velvet Scoter, but retain the nominate epithet, thus *Melanitta fusca*. But it is the third form, now known as Stejneger's Scoter, *Melanitta stejnegeri*, that is the subject of this missive. This population was largely unknown to North American birders until around 2002 when keen-eyed observers on St. Lawrence Island, Alaska, began looking at White-winged Scoters critically and observed that some looked noticeably different.

These differences have now found their way into the most recent field guides, but I'll touch on them briefly here. Males are the most distinctive, and have black flanks (instead of brown), a big dark knob on the bill (compared to a smaller knob), and a distinct, yellow coloration along the cutting edge of the bill (instead of orange to black). The white patch around the eye is subtly different in shape, being narrower and more vertical, with minimal amount of white above the eye, due to a mostly or entirely dark orbital ring (compared to a variably extensive white orbital ring). At this point the reader will have no doubt noted that I avoided any discussion of the identification of females and immature birds. This is intentional as the identification criteria of these are still being worked out.

In recent years, Stejneger's Scoters have been found with increasing regularity in western Alaska. But why bring them up in a forum catered to an Arizona audience? Well, it turns out that as birders have revisited observations of White-winged Scoters in the lower 48 states, there have been a few instances where they were, in fact, Stejneger's Scoters. Thus far, males have been found in Montana and along the central California coast. I have also heard of a big-knobbed bird observed in central Arizona, though photos were unfortunately lost in a computer crash. It is certainly one that we should place on our radars, being careful to closely scrutinize any white-winged scoter we are fortunate to see this fall and winter.



Those wanting to read up on White-winged Scoter identification and their status in North America can visit: bit.ly/2jZiaWC and bit.ly/2m2SsRR.

Chris Benesh is a tour leader for Field Guides Incorporated (fieldguides.com) and a long-time Tucson resident. An avid birder with a keen interest in bird taxonomy, identification, and education, Chris has served several terms on the Arizona Bird Committee and has taught numerous workshops focused on improving identification skills.

Left: Stejneger's Scoters, Tim Melling

Above: The Bill Williams River delta and Lake Havasu are reliable places to find White-winged Scoters in Arizona



Frequent Flyers Help Us Soar

As winter arrives, bird enthusiasts across Arizona eagerly await the return of Sandhill Cranes to the Sulphur Springs Valley. Each year we delight in watching these graceful birds take off and return from Whitewater Draw by the thousands. This amazing and dependable cycle makes the Sandhill Crane a perfect mascot for Tucson Audubon's Frequent Flyer program.

By becoming a Frequent Flyer and contributing a monthly donation to the organization, you provide welcome and reliable funds that power Tucson Audubon's mission all year long. You also ensure that your giving goes further by sparing us the overhead costs and precious time lost on processing renewal notices.

The joy Sandhill Cranes bring us during the holiday season is echoed when you share the wonder of birds with others through a gift membership to Tucson Audubon. Connecting people with birds fosters a life-long enjoyment of, and desire to protect, our avian

friends. A gift membership is not only a gift for your friends and family, it's a gift to the birds!

We will send your gift membership recipient a card announcing your generosity and a full year subscription to the *Vermilion Flycatcher* so that they will remember you, Tucson Audubon, and our fantastic world of birds all year long.

Thank you for supporting Tucson Audubon's mission in so many ways!



Diana Rosenblum

Diana Rosenblum,
Membership & Development Coordinator
drosenblum@tucsonaudubon.org



Know Someone Who Loves Birds?

Share the joy with a Gift Membership to Tucson Audubon.

We've made it easy to give a Gift Membership to a friend or family member. Just go to tucsonaudubon.org/join.

Thank you for supporting birds and birding in Southeast Arizona!



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Tucson, AZ 85705

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