

VERMILION FLYCATCHER

TUCSON AUDUBON

Fall 2022 | Vol 67 No 4



VOTE |
BIRDS!

TUCSON AUDUBON SOCIETY

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Fall 2022 | Vol 67 No 4

MISSION

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

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300 E University Blvd. #120, Tucson, AZ 85705
TEL 520-629-0510 · FAX 520-232-5477

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Vermilion Flycatcher Production Team

Matt Griffiths, *Editor-in-Chief*
Melina Lew, *Design*

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ON THE COVER

Yellow-billed Cuckoo by Peter Brannon, an avid birder and wildlife photographer living in Tampa Bay, Florida.

ABOVE: Green-tailed Towhee, Shawn Cooper

BIRDS' PLACE IN THE POLITICAL ECOSYSTEM

Dear Friends:

At this year's Southeast Arizona Birding Festival I ran into a community volunteer with whom I've interacted over the years for causes related to social justice and human rights. So I was a bit surprised when she asked if I was enjoying my work with Audubon, "because surely there aren't any politics in birds." Her question made me pause for a moment, before responding, "Everything is political with birds." They inhabit, live, die, or thrive in a world shaped by our political policies and choices. And despite their amazing birdsong, they have voice only if we ourselves proclaim their right to live and flourish.

Since that encounter, I've been reflecting on that pause of mine. Not that I doubt everything with birds is indeed political. But I realize I also want to believe there's a realm where one can encounter the wonder and expansiveness of nature (which so many of us seek through birdwatching) without it being sullied by today's politics. But such unsullied encounters are impossible in the world we've brought about. Willfully ignoring climate change and our responsibility for it, failing to implement measures to prevent and adapt to it, we—especially the industrialized world—have all but ensured ever more extreme environmental upheaval for decades (or even longer) to come.

Returning again to my startled pause: I was taken aback that someone so politically aware could believe the natural world exists apart from politics, could fail to recognize that we have created a perilous, inescapable feedback loop: human politics shape nature (which, of course, we are part of, however much we may believe and act otherwise), which in turn shapes human politics, which in turn shape nature (and so on). At stake is the quality of life and even the survival of countless human and non-human beings, in all their wondrous diversity and interdependency.

Upon even further reflection, I realize that my pause arose from something even more fundamental: my human need to connect and to belong. Sometimes consciously, sometimes not, I yearn to belong to nature, to birds, to wildlife, to plants, to place, to family, to neighbors and colleagues, to community and society, to "the other" in all its forms, to past and future

generations, to my most authentic and real self. In that brief encounter at the birding festival, just when I and that longtime acquaintance were connecting over our shared love of birds and our commitment to social activism, a gulf opened between us. We quickly bridged that gulf, but the momentary disconnection, and the accompanying feeling of alienation, has stuck with me.

Our world is rife with disconnection, especially in places of policy-making and governance, pervaded as they are by either/or, all-or-nothing thinking,

not least when it comes to conservation. We're told we must choose between the (implicitly economic) well-being of people and the well-being of wildlife. When will enough of us realize that's a false choice? And what will it take for us to commit to one another and to the earth long enough to negotiate our differences and take the next-best step forward together? In this world we have both inherited and made, seeing and acting upon interconnection is a pragmatic necessity.

But we must be idealistic pragmatists, and pragmatic idealists. And we must accept that just as there is no escaping from nature, there is no escaping from politics.

Including electoral politics. And so I urge us all to connect with whatever fills us with love—be it birds, nature, family, friends, community—and let that love motivate us to become informed voters and to robustly exercise our right to vote, choosing candidates at the local, state, and national levels who understand how much is at stake, and who are willing to be both principled and pragmatic in enacting legislation for our community's, our nation's, and our world's greater, interdependent good.



Yours in advocacy and community partnership,

Michael McDonald
Executive Director

ALMANAC of BIRDS

OCTOBER to DECEMBER

When the creators of the first Christmas Bird Counts set out 122 years ago they probably had no idea this new tradition would endure into the 21st century and that it would ultimately represent one of the most valuable data sets in the world. Using this data, scientists are now able to see how bird populations have changed due to many factors, a lot of them human-caused and decided upon by elected officials.

Join a Christmas Bird Count this year and help us monitor how our birds are doing. Here are three fun local counts and some of the birds you might see. Go to [TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/CBC](https://tucsonaudubon.org/cbc) for details.



Matt Griffiths
Communications Coordinator
mgriffiths@tucsonaudubon.org

Northern Shoveler, Mick Thompson
Mountain Bluebird, Mick Thompson
White-crowned Sparrow, Martin Molina



TUCSON VALLEY

Last year was the 50th Tucson Valley count, and it really is a showcase for winter birds in Southeast Arizona. Because of the many ponds and lakes in city parks throughout the valley, Tucson is a magnet for water birds that spend the cold season here. In the total species count of 154 last year, there were 20 kinds of ducks, including seven Wood Ducks and over 300 Northern Shovelers. There were also seven different kinds of woodpeckers, including the winter specialty Lewis's Woodpecker. Other fun birds found were an incredible 303 Lawrence's Goldfinches, a continuing Greater Pewee in Reid Park, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Black-throated Green Warbler, and the always fun to find in Urban Tucson, American Pipit. Tucson did well in its traditional high tally of Vermilion Flycatchers—391 may have been the winner for the entire country! From the edge of Mt. Lemmon to the Tucson Mountains, and the Rillito to the Santa Cruz, this count has a bit of everything.

ATASCOSA HIGHLANDS

The beauty of our desert grasslands and oak woodlands are on full display on the routes of the Atascosa Highlands count. These canyons and rolling hills are locations many people have never birded, so if you're looking for a winter fix of Bridled Titmice and Rufous-crowned Sparrows in new areas, this is the survey for you. A total species count of 143 was generated for 2021 with good numbers of many fun species such as 407 Ruby-crowned Kinglets, 39 Chihuahuan Ravens, an amazing 184 Common Ground Doves, and 13 Golden Eagles! Top that off with Eastern, Western, and Mountain Bluebirds, Townsend's Solitaire, and 274 Mexican Jays. Encompassing hotspots such as Sycamore Canyon, California Gulch, and Pena Blanca Lake, this count is also good for super rare birds of the borderlands—last year produced two Green Kingfishers, Eastern Phoebe, Rufous-capped Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and an incredible 10 Five-striped Sparrows!

AVRA VALLEY

The saltbush flats and silty soils of Avra Valley put on a sparrow show for this count that also includes portions of Saguaro National and Tucson Mountain Parks. The count's 117 species in 2021 included nine different sparrows, some of which were over 2000 White-crowned Sparrows and a surprising 68 Black-chinned Sparrows. The wide open spaces mixed with agricultural lands provide ample hunting grounds for raptors, so it's no wonder Ferruginous Hawk, Crested Caracara, and 68 Red-tailed Hawks were found. The lush grounds of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum are also included in the count circle—there's no telling what rarity might show up. Maybe another Allen's Hummingbird? The Central Arizona Project recharge pond usually always has water in it and is a good magnet for Osprey, grebes, and ducks of all kinds. Still not sold? You could also see flocks of Lark Buntings and have a chance at a three-thrasher day—Curve-billed, Sage, and the rare Bendire's. See you out there on a Christmas Bird Count!

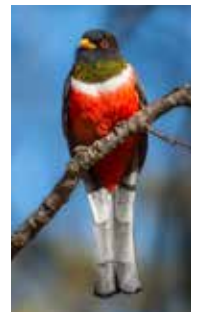


VOTE! BIRDS!

Birds and electoral politics are inextricably linked. We wish it weren't so and we could just focus on the wonder of birds and the joy of birding. But birds are in peril. And how we birders and millions of other Americans vote this November—in local, state, and national races around the country—will determine whether birds' lives get better or worse. In this special section of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*, we explain the many ways today's electoral politics impact birds. Read it, share it with other bird-lovers, and then flock to the polls and vote for birds!

VOTE BIRDS!

ALL LEVELS OF GOVER



ENVIRONMENT IMPACT BIRDS!

On a typical ballot, the number of races and candidates can be stupefying, and most voters recognize only a few: President, Vice President, Senator, Governor, Mayor, and the like. Yet races for little-known offices can have enormous impact, especially as elected officials make a host of high-level appointments. Every issue Tucson Audubon addresses—such as the survival of birds and other wildlife; conservation of natural habitats and ecosystems; climate change; water; environmental justice—is profoundly impacted by the outcome of elections.

To illustrate what we mean, here is just a small sample of the many elected and appointed officials with a role—often a powerful one—in issues Tucson Audubon has long been involved in, and just a small selection of the many bird species impacted by these officials' decisions.

ISSUES

MINING: While technologically critical minerals and metals have become more necessary than ever, including for fighting climate change, extremely outdated and lax mining laws and regulations leave fragile, environmentally valuable habitat across Arizona—in the Patagonia Mountains, in the Santa Ritas, on Mt. Lemmon, and beyond—at needless risk of irreparable damage.

VILLAGES AT VIGNETO: If approved, this proposed mega-development—essentially, a new city—outside Benson could drain extensive portions of the San Pedro River dry. This project is so backward-thinking, foolhardy, and potentially destructive that improper political interference and an apparent financial quid pro quo were key to it receiving federal approval (now on hold).

I-11: In addition to negative impacts on indigenous cultural and historical sites; on climate change; on human health, especially in communities subject to environmental and economic injustice, this unnecessary new freeway would, if routed through the pristine desert habitat of the Avra and Altar Valleys, severely impact wildlife and the environment.

CATTLE: While the compatibility of cattle-grazing with maintaining healthy, biodiverse grasslands remains open to debate, of this Tucson Audubon is sure: cattle do not belong in sensitive riparian areas. Yet state and federal agencies have long allowed cattle to degrade these highly threatened, invaluable ecosystems, Sonoita Creek being a prime example.

SUNZIA: This proposed high-voltage, renewable-energy transmission line remains extremely concerning, as much of its route would run through some of the most sensitive and ecologically valuable stretches of the San Pedro River.

FEDERAL OFFICIALS (APPOINTED)

PRESIDENT APPOINTS & SENATE CONFIRMS:

- Director of Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- Director of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Administrator of Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Administrator of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Supreme Court Justices
- Numerous other federal judges

PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTEE APPOINTS OR SUPERVISES:

- Chief of U.S. Forest Service (USFS), appointed by Secretary of Agriculture
- Commanding General of Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE), supervised by Assistant Secretary of the Army

ARIZONA STATE OFFICIALS (APPOINTED)

GOVERNOR APPOINTS & STATE SENATE CONFIRMS:

- Director of Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ)
- Water Quality Appeals Board
- Arizona Corporation Commission
- Director of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT)
- Director of Arizona State Parks & Trails Department
- Arizona State Parks Board
- Director of the Arizona Game & Fish Department
- Arizona Game & Fish Commission
- Arizona State Land Commissioner
- Arizona Supreme Court Justices
- Numerous state and county justices

COUNTY OFFICIALS (ELECTED)

- Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz County, Pima County, Pinal County, & Maricopa County

MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS (ELECTED)

- Mayor & Town Council of Patagonia, Benson, Tucson, Sahuarita, Marana, Phoenix, & other cities



David Robinson
Director of Conservation Advocacy
drobinson@tucsonaudubon.org

BIRDS & CLIMATE

Probably no other issue demonstrates the impact of electoral politics on bird conservation more starkly than climate policy. And probably no other issue demonstrates the impact of electoral politics on climate policy more starkly than the U.S.'s involvement with the Paris Climate Agreement: under President Obama's leadership the U.S. joined the Agreement; under President Trump's leadership the U.S. withdrew; and under President Biden's leadership the U.S. rejoined.

But the U.S.'s involvement in the Paris Agreement is only the most well-known example of the election of one politician over another leading directly to hugely consequential changes in climate policy. For instance, as *New York Times* reporters Nadia Popovich and Brad Plumer wrote in September 2020, "President Trump has made dismantling federal climate policies a centerpiece of his administration... A handful of major climate rules reversed or weakened under Mr. Trump could have a significant effect on future emissions. Together, these rollbacks are expected to result in an additional 1.8 billion metric tons of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere by 2035. That's more than the combined energy emissions of Germany, Britain and Canada in one year."

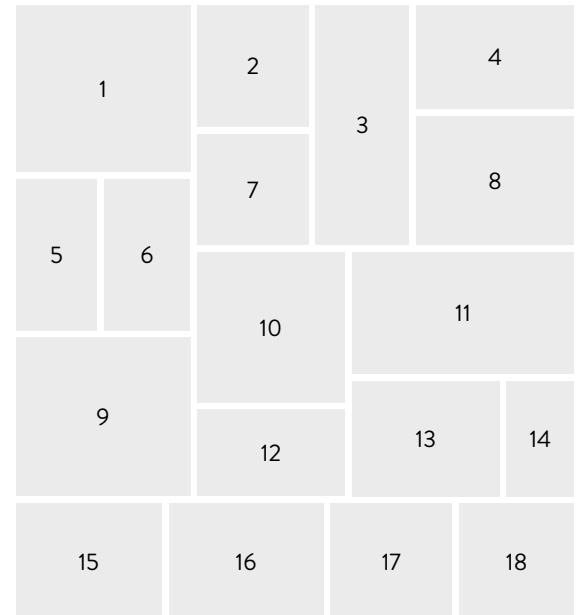
Or consider Senator Joe Manchin's impact on climate policy. Almost single-handedly, he doomed President Biden's Build Back Better Act. Then, after months of protracted negotiations, he doomed its scaled-back successor, the Inflation Reduction Act. And then, when the Act had been pronounced dead, he resurrected it, albeit with major concessions for the fossil-fuel industry. What's more, at the time of the writing of this piece, Congressional Democrats were waging an internal battle over a side-deal, cut between Manchin and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to secure Manchin's vote for the Inflation Reduction Act, by fast-tracking fossil-fuel infrastructure projects. No matter the outcome to this latest battle, the central factor in all sides' ultimate decisions will have been calculations about the November midterms. In other words: electoral politics.



Ingrid V Taylor

IMAGE GUIDE:

ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT IMPACT BIRDS!



VILLAGES AT VIGNETO (SAN PEDRO)

- Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2) Steve Baranoff
- Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (18) Kelly Colgan Azar
- Lucy's Warbler (10) Audrey Arnold

SUNZIA TRANSMISSION LINE

- Sandhill Crane (16) Mick Thompson
- Nashville Warbler (1) Kenneth Cole Schneider
- Gray Hawk (8) Robert Withey
- Elf Owl (7) Scott Olmstead
- Violet-green Swallow (17) Jamie Chavez

I-11 FREEWAY

- Desert Purple Martin (4) Ned Harris
- Gilded Flicker (6) Jim Burns
- Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (18) Kelly Colgan Azar

MINES (PATAGONIA, SANTA RITAS, MT. LEMMON)

- Mexican Spotted Owl (9) Frank Retes
- Common Black Hawk (15) Ned Harris
- Montezuma Quail (11) Greg Lavaty
- Elegant Trogon (14) Cathy Wasson
- Varied Bunting (3) Larry Selman
- Arizona Grasshopper Sparrow (13) Alan Schmierer
- Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo (2) Steve Baranoff

CATTLE

- Violet-crowned Hummingbird (12) Leslie Leathers
- Loggerhead Shrike (5) Alan Schmierer

...AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

We birders tend to pride ourselves on being excellent observers, and rightly so. Identifying birds depends on carefully observing many things: a bird's size, shape, posture, color, behavior, habitat, vocalizations, location, and more. From time to time we've even turned our attention on ourselves as birders, taking pleasure in observing our oddities and eccentricities—what today might be called our bird nerdiness. But only recently have we begun to grapple with our community's more troubling aspects: its overwhelming whiteness, its relative affluence and unexamined privilege, its passionate concern for the welfare of vulnerable wildlife but relative indifference to the welfare of vulnerable people.

In these respects, the birding world has been very much like the conservation and environmental movements as a whole, movements that, notwithstanding all their positive achievements, have deep roots in racism and colonialism. (For a superb history of the conservation and environmental movements that encompasses both the good and the bad, see Michelle Nijhaus's award-winning book, *Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction.*)

Here in the U.S. over the past several decades, a much-needed contrast and complement to those movements has emerged: the environmental justice movement. The term "environmental justice" can mean different things to different people, but as the Ecological Society of America puts it, "all definitions affirm the importance of equitable access to a clean and healthy environment for all people, as well as opportunities for meaningful participation in shaping healthy communities." That principle may seem self-evident, but the fact is that the siting, design, and operational practices (both legal and illegal) of polluting industries and infrastructure—toxic waste dumps, incinerator plants, oil wells, cargo ports, freeways, and more—have subjected communities of color and low-income communities to a grossly disproportionate amount of our society's environmental pollution.

At long last, though, an evolution is underway. A consensus is emerging that wildlife conservation must address the needs and involve the meaningful participation of local communities, and that fighting for the environment must also mean fighting for environmental justice.



Stephen Melkisetian

In the birding and bird-conservation world, this emerging consensus intertwines with the reckoning around race, diversity, and equity ignited in the spring of 2020 by the launching of Black Birders Week. A response both to the racist incident against birder Chris Cooper in New York's Central Park and the police murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Black Birders Week transformed anger and grief into an astoundingly powerful display of Black pride and joy, which in turn catalyzed and turbo-charged a long-overdue transformation of the birding world. The transformation is far from complete, but the momentum and direction are unmistakable: we are becoming a more diverse, more welcoming, and more politically engaged community.

Over the long term, that political engagement will undoubtedly take many forms. But in the short term—the upcoming elections—it must prioritize voting, especially for candidates committed not only to conservation and the environment, but also to environmental justice. The well-being and survival of precious, irreplaceable birds, and precious, irreplaceable people, is at stake.

VOTER GUIDE – NOVEMBER 8 IS ELECTION DAY!

Whether you're voting for the first time or have voted all your life, you can find all the tools and information you need at [VOTE411.ORG](https://www.vote411.org)—relevant dates for elections in your state; the races, candidates, and propositions on your ballot; tools for registering to vote and for voting by mail; your polling location; and much more.

For Arizonans, another option is to go to the Arizona Voter Information Portal: [MY.ARIZONA.VOTE](https://my.arizona.vote).

For more specific information, you can also go to your county's election website. Just search "your county + elections department."

Key dates & times for Arizonans:

- Tue, Oct. 11 (11:59 pm): Deadline for registering to vote
- Wed, Oct 12: Ballots mailed out; first in-person voting locations & drop boxes open
- Fri, Oct 28 (5 pm): Deadline for requesting a mail-in ballot
- Tue, Nov 1: Last recommended day to mail your mail-in ballot; ballots must be received by your County Recorder's office no later than 7 pm on Election Day
- Tue, Nov 8 (6 am to 7 pm): Election Day



BIRDS, WATER, AND POLITICS

All life—including the birds we love—depends on water. Yet with the most severe drought in 1,200 years draining Lake Mead and Lake Powell, drying up the Colorado River, and threatening vital wildlife habitat, and with human activity of many sorts further depleting our water resources, Arizona faces a grim water future unless we change course.



Laurie Cantillo is a Tucson-based writer, nature lover, and volunteer at the Paton Center for Hummingbirds.



RIPARIAN ECOSYSTEMS

As bird lovers, we know that riparian ecosystems teem with life. But in the desert southwest, such ecosystems are rapidly disappearing: 90% of Arizona’s riparian habitats have already been lost. While these ribbons of green in the desert account for less than 5% of the state’s landscapes, they support more than 40% of our bird species—including year-round residents, breeding birds, wintering birds, and seasonal migrants—and are globally important, biodiversity hotspots.

Tucson Audubon and our allies are working tirelessly to preserve Arizona’s remaining riparian habitats, but we can’t succeed without the support and partnership of local, state, and federal governments.

GROUNDWATER

While the Colorado River crisis has dominated recent water news, another major threat receives far less coverage: unregulated groundwater pumping. Groundwater supplies 40% of Arizona’s current water use, followed by the Colorado River (36%), in-state rivers (21%), and reclaimed water (3%). The water in our aquifers took many thousands of years to accumulate; we’re taking mere decades to deplete it.

The laws and regulations that have governed groundwater use in Arizona can best be expressed this way: “Help yourself, no matter the impact on your human, plant, and animal neighbors.”

In 1980, briefly waking up to the unsustainability of this “help yourself” approach, the Arizona Legislature passed the Groundwater Management Act, limiting groundwater use in Arizona’s most populous areas. But apart from sovereign tribal lands, groundwater pumping remains virtually unregulated in 80% of the state, where more than a fifth of the population lives.

With the supply of Colorado River water rapidly dwindling and our reliance on groundwater rapidly growing, we need Arizona lawmakers who will act courageously, responsibly, and swiftly to regulate and limit groundwater use throughout the entire state.

AGRICULTURE

Irrigated agriculture consumes a whopping three-quarters of Arizona’s available water supply. And while news stories often focus on small



family farms, the truth is that massive industrial-farming operations have relocated to Arizona over the past decade to take advantage of our unregulated groundwater pumping (see previous page). And with their financial resources, they can dig ever deeper wells, continuing to drain our aquifers even as water levels sink. Owned by hedge funds, private-equity firms, and giant corporations, these industrial farms grow water-intensive crops such as alfalfa, pistachios, and pecans, often for out-of-state markets, all with the blessing of our state's policymakers.

Ordinary citizens taking shorter showers can't outweigh the impact of water-guzzling industrial farms. As with so many other water issues, controlling agricultural water use requires government action.

MINING

While essential to modern life, twenty-first century mining uses a staggering amount of water—up to millions of gallons a day. And Arizona is home to an ever-increasing number of large-scale mining operations that place further pressure on our already depleted water resources and threaten to wreak havoc on fragile ecosystems.

U.S. law governing mining was written in 1872—150 years ago!—when miners used picks and shovels. Federal legislators must catch up with reality and pass laws to regulate 21st-century industrialized mining, taking into account the U.S.'s need not only for mineral security, but also for a green economy with living-wage jobs, and for undeveloped and minimally developed lands that support biodiversity.



UNCONSTRAINED DEVELOPMENT

Growth—whether residential, commercial, or industrial—demands water. How much water depends to a very large degree on public policy.

Las Vegas, for example, has increased in population yet shrunk in water use. How? By becoming one of the most water-efficient cities in the world. For instance, every drop of water that goes down a Las Vegas drain is reprocessed and pumped back into Lake Mead.

Arizona, in contrast, pairs development with denial. The City of Benson, for example, supports the Villages at Vigneto project, which would convert 20,000 square miles of nearby desert into almost 30,000 new homes, plus golf courses, artificial lakes, and shopping and recreation centers—and would likely dry up large stretches of the San Pedro River. Even Tucson, a stand-out among Arizona cities for its water-conservation practices, still allows ever more housing to be built, further and further into the desert, despite the outsized burden it places on our water supply.

We all have a part to play in solving Arizona's water crisis, including making individual choices that reduce our water use. But right now the most important thing we can do is elect candidates at all levels of government who will enact sane, responsible water policy for the Arizona of today and of the foreseeable future, where drought and climate change are inescapable facts to which we *must* adapt.



OPPOSITE: Black-necked Stilt, Mick Thompson; Riparian ecosystem, Scott Olmstead
THIS PAGE: Pecan orchard, Simon Morris; Las Vegas sprawl, Jan Buckholtz

ADVOCACY IN ACTION!

Birding & Canvassing volunteers about to start doorknocking near Tucson's Reid Park—an innovative, nonpartisan, Get Out The Vote project by Tucson Audubon and Environmental Voter Project.

TEN YEARS of ELEGANT TROGON SURVEYS in SOUTHEAST ARIZONA

Streamside trogon habitat in the Chiricahua Mountains, Matt Griffiths

The spring of 2022 marked the 10th year of Tucson Audubon coordinating Elegant Trogon surveys of five Sky Island mountain ranges of Southeast Arizona. With the help of 95 volunteers, 84 different routes were surveyed for trogons during the month of May. Each of the five mountain ranges surveyed is an Important Bird Area and surveyed on its own weekend day starting the second week of May. The Atascosa Highlands (Atascosa Mountains plus the Pajarito Mountains) are surveyed earliest as they are the lowest elevation of all five ranges. Heat is a particular concern in this area so we do it as early as possible. The Patagonia and Santa Rita Mountains are always the following weekend. The last weekend of the month, Memorial Day Weekend, is when the two largest ranges are surveyed, the Huachuca and Chiricahua Mountains.

The timing of these surveys is specifically chosen with careful input from Rick Taylor, who ran a survey of Elegant Trogons of the Chiricahua and sometimes Huachuca Mountains for many years before Tucson Audubon joined the effort and expanded the survey to five mountain ranges. By May in most years, nearly all of the Elegant Trogons that wintered in Mexico have returned to Arizona and the males are very vocal. Their territorial barks make them very easy to detect on the survey even when no playback is used. Most of the Elegant Trogon pairs are not quite at the nesting stage yet which minimizes the risk of our surveying disturbing active nests.

Elegant Trogons usually have territories established by May but when they actually nest is highly variable. Some lay eggs as early as May but most egg laying starts in June and continues into July. This timing maximizes the chances that large insect abundance is peaking when nestlings need a lot of food and then need to learn to hunt as fledglings in late summer. Not only is the current monsoon a large part of trogon nesting success, but the

rainfall of the previous year also plays a pivotal role. When Elegant Trogons first arrive in April, habitat conditions in the Sky Island mountain ranges are very influenced by the previous year's levels of both monsoon and winter rains. Our lowest ever count of trogons occurred in 2021 with only 68 individuals. Ironically, the 2021 monsoon was one of the wettest on record but it followed a previous 12 months (June 2019–June 2020) that were some of the driest ever in Southeast Arizona. It was these drought conditions that Elegant Trogons moving north in 2021 encountered and resulted in the very low count. The habitat was so stressed that spring that many traveling trogons turned back toward parts of Mexico that had received more rain the previous year.

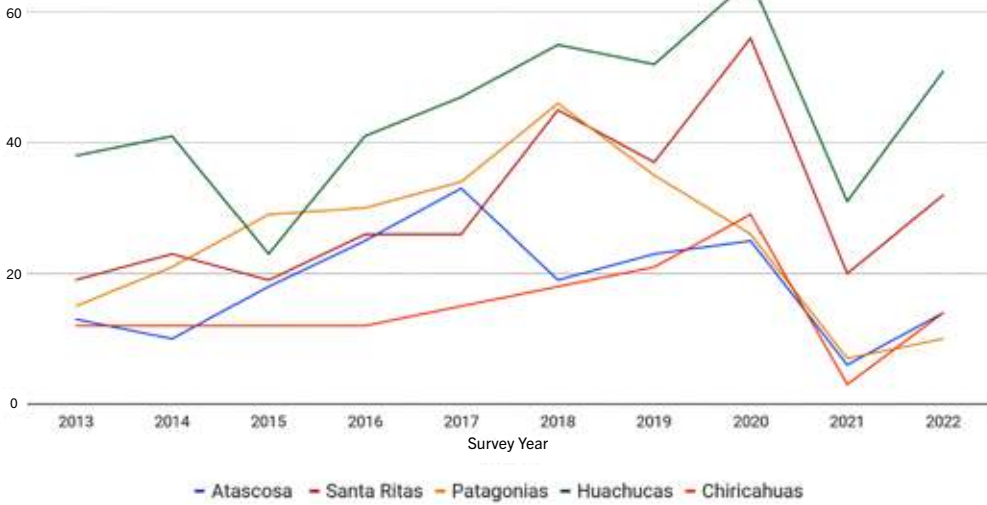
The 2022 results are very interesting as they have increased over 2021 (nearly double!) and show a population rebound occurring but still 80 short of the all time high of 201 in 2020. These fluctuations are so intriguing when compared to habitat conditions as influenced by monsoonal rainfall of the previous year. The University of Arizona maps show cumulative monsoon rainfall in comparison to average monsoon rainfall for each area. Within the maps, brown areas indicate areas that received below average rainfall from the monsoon that year, white indicates an average amount, green is above average and blue is about three times the average amount of rainfall. Elegant Trogons feed mostly on fruits and large bodied insects such as katydids and walking sticks. The availability of both of these food sources is strongly influenced by monsoon moisture in southern Arizona. It's no wonder then that severely fluctuating rainfall over the past three years could lead to such differing results in the Elegant Trogon count over the same time period. If the trend continues after this very good 2022 monsoon season and the region gets normal rains over the winter, there's no reason to suspect we won't count even more trogons in 2023!

Special thanks to the hundreds of volunteers who have made the last 10 years of the Elegant Trogon Survey of Southeast Arizona possible! It is the largest annual survey of the Arizona Important Bird Areas program and we couldn't have done it without you! Thanks!

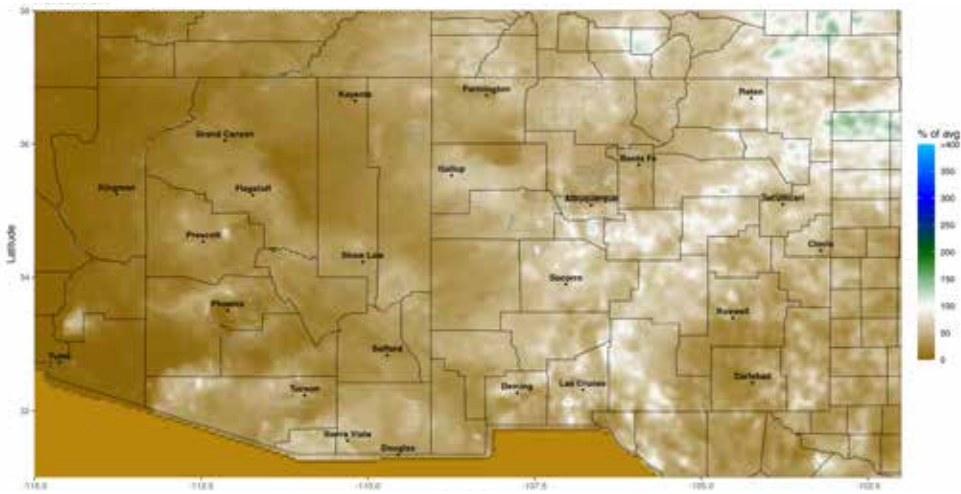


Jennie MacFarland,
Bird Conservation Biologist
jmacfarland@tucsonaudubon.org

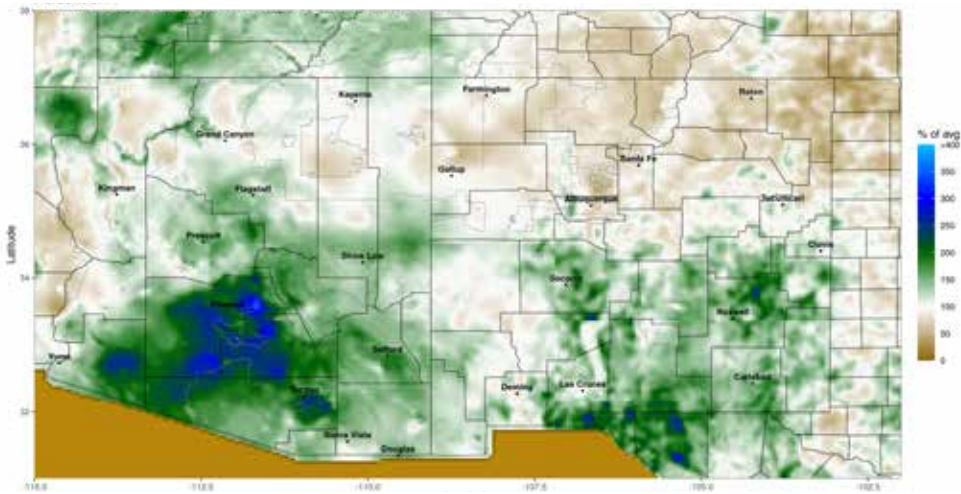
ELEGANT TROGON AZ SURVEY DATA 2013-2022



PERCENT OF AVERAGE PRECIPITATION (%): 2020-06-15 TO 2020-09-30



PERCENT OF AVERAGE PRECIPITATION (%): 2021-06-15 TO 2021-09-30



Maps source: cals.arizona.edu/climate/misc/monsoon/az_monsoon.html

Dan Weisz; Jeremy Hayes; ©bryanjsmith

SOUTHEASTERN ARIZONA FALL PLANTING GUIDE

John Fowler; all other images by Lynn Hassler

A wise colleague continually reminds me that a garden is never actually completed, but is constantly changing and evolving. So with that in mind, remember that your wildlife garden will never be “finished.” Opportunities for change and improvement are always present, and fall is an excellent time to plan and rejuvenate.

In many areas of North America the spring season is prime planting time (mainly because of cold, harsh winter weather). But we like to be different! In our region, fall is by far the best season for planting new shrubs and trees for a number of reasons.

- Fall soil is warmer and more conditioned than spring soil, allowing for better root development and growth.
- Pests and diseases that might otherwise attack young, vulnerable plants lessen with cooler temperatures.
- Water requirements are diminished with cooler weather, and many plants go somewhat dormant for the winter.
- Milder temperatures and more dependable rainfall help plants acclimatize easily, enabling them to better withstand the onslaught of next year’s heat and aridity.

As you contemplate your ever-evolving landscape, keep in mind that planting trees, shrubs, and perennials of different heights will accommodate a greater variety of birds. In nature, plant communities generally consist of layers of different vegetative materials—tall trees with lower-growing trees and shrubs that offer an understory. If you have the opportunity to observe birds in their natural habitats, pay attention to where they spend most of their time. Quail and Abert’s Towhees, for example, are usually on the ground searching for seeds and grains, and they like vegetation with low-lying branches that can provide instant cover and shelter. Hawks prefer high perches for searching out prey, and many songbirds, such as cardinals and

goldfinches, like it somewhere in between. Also, with careful observation in spring and summer, you may get an idea as to where in the canopy different species choose to nest. You can’t go wrong by emulating nature.

Bear in mind that many birds sometimes inhabit a range of different vegetation heights. Hummingbirds often perch on the highest point of a tree or shrub to survey their territories, but may spend a greater portion of their time on lower-growing plants where they seek out flowers that provide sweet nectar. Goldfinches feast on the seeds of short perennials or grasses, but may also be seen hanging upside down, gleaning seeds from the ball-like fruits of the tallest sycamore tree.

Presented here are a variety of wildlife plants that do well with fall planting. There are many more to choose from! Just remember to avoid planting frost-sensitive plants (like citrus or bougainvillea) because they may not survive a cold winter. And, by the way, don’t forget to sow some annual wildflower seeds for a spring-blooming show. Happy planting!



Lynn Hassler
*Green Gardeners Volunteer Captain
Historic Y*

Get your plants at the **Fall Native Plant Sale**, October 8–10. See TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG for details.

Need advice on planning your landscapes? Check out the Gardens on the Green workshop series! See page 26 for more info.

FEATURED PLANTS



VELVET MESQUITE
(*Neltuma velutina*, formerly *Prosopis*)
Large multi-trunked, shrublike trees with wide-spreading crowns offer nest sites (bring on the Lucy's Warblers!) and much appreciated shade. Mature plants can reach 20–30' high and wide. Pollinators flock to the light yellow blooms which are followed by edible seed pods. Leaves and flowers feed the larvae of Leda Ministreak butterflies.



DESERT WILLOW (*Chilopsis linearis*)
This 20' high x 15' wide tree has graceful foliage and beautiful flowers. Plant to shade an eastern, southern, or western exposure in summer, and still enjoy the sun's rays in winter when it loses its leaves. A grouping of unpruned plants can work as a hedge or wind break. Try one of the brightly colored flowering cultivars and watch for hummers, verdins, orioles, house finches, and sphinx moths to visit.



DESERT HACKBERRY
(*Celtis pallida*)
Large and spiny (8–10' high and wide) this shrub may be plain in the flowering department, but the small reddish orange fruits attract many birds: mockingbirds, thrashers, Phainopeplas, cardinals, Pyrrhuloxias, and White-crowned Sparrows to name a few. Its dense habit is ideal for shelter and nesting sites.



HOPBUSH (*Dodonaea viscosa*)
A fast-growing bright green evergreen shrub (12–15' high/10–12' wide) that is pleasing to the eyes. Plant three together to screen out your neighbors. Foliage provides cover and places to nest, and seeds are devoured by quail and doves..



DESERT HONEYSUCKLE
(*Anisacanthus thurberi*)
Medium-sized shrub (4–6' high x 3–5' wide) is somewhat rangy looking but its rusty orange blooms are a favorite with hummingbirds. Foliage offers food for the Elada Checkerspot butterfly.



OCOTILLO (*Fouquieria splendens*)
A welcome accent in any landscape, wand-like branches (perfect perches for our avian friends) arch from a central base to about 15' and outward to a diameter of 10'. Red-orange tubular flowers beckon hummingbirds, orioles, Verdins, House Finches, and carpenter bees.



BAMBOO MUHLY
(*Muhlenbergia dumosa*)
Soften your landscape with this soft billowy bunchgrass (4'x4') that resembles bamboo. Perfect for massing beneath a mesquite. The soil beneath the arching branches makes an ideal location for ground nesters, and the grass leaves offer nesting material.



FAIRY DUSTER (*Calliandra eriophylla*)
Sun-loving and low-growing (2–3' high x 2–4' wide) this semi-evergreen shrub is largely inconspicuous until it bursts into bloom with fairy-like puffballs in varying shades of pink. Hummingbirds and many other pollinators are attracted to the blooms. Seeds are eaten by small mammals, doves, and quail.



BRITTLEBUSH (*Encelia farinosa*)
Plant this small to medium shrub (3–4' high and wide) in full sun. Silvery green leaves stand out in low light. Masses of yellow daisy-like flowers emerge in spring. One of the best seed producers around.



DESERT SENNA (*Senna covesii*)
This low-growing shrub (1 ½' x 2') has butter-rich yellow flowers that attract butterflies and other pollinators. Leaves feed the caterpillars of some Sulphur butterflies.



PARRY PENSTEMON
(*Penstemon parryi*)
This wildflower hugs the ground until it sends up long vertical flower spikes (up to 4') with bright pink tubular blooms in spring. Wherever you plant it, hummingbirds, Verdins, House Finches, and lizards are sure to follow.



DOGWEED
(*Thymophylla pentachaeta*)
A delicate and small wildflower (only 6" high) with golden blossoms that performs on and off throughout the year, often forming carpets. Dainty Sulphur butterflies use dogweed as a host plant for their caterpillars.

A BUTTERFLY'S-EYE VIEW



Puddling blue butterflies, Anita Gould



Pipevine swallowtail caterpillar on pipevine, Jonathan Horst



Blanket flower, Robert Nunnally

A lazy late-morning breeze slowly draws the humid air upstream from Sonoita Creek and toward the foothills of the Santa Rita and Patagonia Mountains. The air is rich with the scents of nectar from the innumerable flower blossoms coming from the garden beds of the Paton Center, from the Cuckoo Corridor's riotous mix of plants, and even from the hummingbird feeders warming in the bright sunlight... at least it is if you are a butterfly. Following the scent to its strongest location, butterflies converge on the densely vegetated floodplain of the creek and, once close enough, their ultraviolet-sensitive eyes guide them down to the richest nectaries at the end of the UV-landing strips many flowers provide them.

Analogous to the Christmas Bird Count, the Butterfly Count Program, run by the North American Butterfly Association, involves a one-day count of all the butterflies in 15 mile diameter circles (learn more at SEABA.ORG/NABA-COUNTS). Last year's count circle for the Santa Rita Mountains recorded 79 species, tops in the country for 2021. On August 9th of this year, 80 species were recorded in the Patagonia Summer Count! The Santa Rita count is still to come, but the Patagonia count will be at or very near the top of places with the highest species diversity in the country again this year.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the Richard Grand Memorial Meadow at the Paton Center is always one of the most prolific sites during the Patagonia count. It has not only an exceptional mix of nectar-producing flowers late in the

monsoon season, but the pond and stream provide places for puddling, and the meadow and surrounding garden beds have been intentionally planted to contain a wide array of larval host-plants—the specific plants that different caterpillar species eat.

Look intently and some flowers almost seem to pulse or radiate in the afternoon sun. I've always interpreted this as my brain trying in vain to interpret ultraviolet signals just beyond what I can actually make sense of. While you and I may not be able to see the ultraviolet markings on the flowers (and unfortunately on the butterflies and birds themselves!) these markings make the meadow and many of the areas around the Paton Center glow to butterflies. Happily though, we can see the results as butterflies and caterpillars abound for a few months in the late summer each year.

Some of the easiest caterpillars to see each year are the Darth Maul-esque pipevine swallowtails (which feed on desert pipevines near the viewing pavilion), hairy-spiked orange and blue gulf fritillaries (feed on passion vines), snouts (feed on hackberries), and multiple species of checkerspots (feed on desert honeysuckle). Come out soon and spot some!



Jonathan Horst
Director of Conservation & Research
jhorst@tucsonaudubon.org



GREEN KINGFISHER



Green Kingfisher, Alan Schmierer

A Green Kingfisher at the Paton Center? As one approaches the Sonoita Creek crossing at Pennsylvania Avenue in Patagonia just before entering the Paton Center, the creek looks like it would be quite unappealing to a fish-eating bird. It is either bone-dry (most of the time) or, on select days during the monsoon season, an impassable raging muddy torrent. Neither of these conditions is favorable for kingfishers, which rely on their keen eyesight to spot their aquatic prey in clear water.

Yet looking back in eBird, there is one record entered for the Paton Center of two observers getting “excellent looks at only 15 feet away” of a Green Kingfisher “perched on a heavy stick someone had stuck in the creek at the crossing to Paton’s house”. This is from a checklist dated January 11, 1994.

Ah, the 1990’s! It has been a while since the water table has been high enough for a trickle of clear water to be a feature, at least some of the time, as far up Sonoita Creek as the Paton Center. Fortunately, the creek currently reaches surface level only about a third of a mile downstream and flows most of the year through the adjacent Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve before making its way to Patagonia Lake.

Still, the recent drought years have not been great for the Green Kingfishers of Sonoita Creek. The most recent eBird reports from the Preserve, where this enigmatic species was regularly reported through the 1990s but infrequently since then, are from 2018. The picture is brighter a bit downstream, where a bird survey of the Circle Z Ranch turned up a pair in the summer of 2022, and sightings have persisted into this year at Patagonia Lake State Park as well.

The Green Kingfisher is one of those species with a widespread tropical and subtropical range that reaches its northern limits in Texas and Southeast Arizona. Being at the periphery of its range, it is vulnerable to changes in

its habitat and is much sought-after by birders. To those in the rest of North America (save parts of southern Texas), the Belted Kingfisher is the sole representative of this family, and the first sighting of a Green Kingfisher, barely over half the length and only a third the weight of its widespread and familiar relative, is unforgettable. It looks impossibly small, but with a bill that is incongruously large—cute and fierce at the same time.

Belted Kingfishers are a regular wintering bird in Southeast Arizona in any habitat where their prey is to be found, including along Sonoita Creek. Occasionally one will venture upstream from the Preserve and fly over the Paton Center, its loud rattling call coming as quite a shock to visiting birders, before it makes an aerial U-turn and returns to more productive hunting grounds. This robust, highly migratory species is accustomed to flying at greater heights in search of suitable habitat, than the more sedentary Green Kingfisher, which tends to keep low, closer to cover and to proven food sources. It would be quite surprising for a Green Kingfisher to be seen again at the Paton Center.

Let’s work to see that decisions made by current and future elected leaders (and by extension, the voting citizenry) that impact our precious riparian habitats don’t result in more articles like this one, that feature species that used to be found along Sonoita Creek at the Paton Center.

Louie Dombroski
Paton Center Birder-In-Residence



LOVE, KINDNESS, AND CHALLENGE

It's a privilege to be introduced in this issue of the *Vermilion Flycatcher*. A big thank you to our editor, Matt Griffiths; to my fellow contributors; and, of course, to you, our readers.

i was born and raised in Chukson to families with deep regional roots. Rock hounding, bone collecting, and listening to birds in the shade of a mesquite are natural aspects of life in the Sonoran Desert that ground me. My relationships with blood and chosen family, though ever evolving, serve as my guiding song.

In 2015 a set of professional experiences began that led me to my current position. i labored in the conservation industry with the Arizona Conservation Corps in Chukson and later the Forest Service based out of Tres Piedras, New Mexico. Simultaneously, i organized events and regional tours, and facilitated arts-based programming to help youth build life skills. Afterwards, i was a field instructor for Ironwood Tree Experience, where i led programming aimed at nurturing a sense of place by teaching middle and high school students the ongoing cultural, social, and ecological history of our beloved region. This was, of course, until the pandemic hit and most things were put on pause.

In February 2021, i was hired by Tucson Audubon as a crew member for the Invasive Plant Strike Team. It's an honor to care for our desert in a direct capacity and to participate in the growth of a program with outstanding crew mates and leadership. Working outside strengthened my connection to the earth, but also my dissatisfaction with the reality that affluent neighborhoods are prioritized simply because they have greater resources to commit to the effort of conservation. So i was thrilled to learn that the Advocacy Department was looking for a community organizer, and with the encouragement of my crew mates, i applied for the job.

i feel valued serving in this capacity, especially in the time and climate we find ourselves operating in as an environmental NGO. It's an important step for Tucson Audubon to engage with and take action on environmental justice, including the recognition that processes such as conservation and restoration do not exist in a vacuum separate from colonial history, socioeconomic dynamics, and politics.



Targeting invasive plant species, isaiah kortright

For me this isn't just theoretical. My community organizing is grounded in what i have lived and learned not only about plants, animals, and ecosystems, but also about class, race, gender, sexuality, culture, and history. And my approach to life is composed of love, kindness, and challenge, both for myself and for others. i am thrilled to bring all of this to my work as Tucson Audubon's Community Organizing Coordinator, and to join forces with local communities to achieve great things together for our birds, our environment, and our people.

In Solidarity, i thank you.

P.S. In case you're wondering why i choose to lowercase my name and the pronoun "i" when referring to myself, i do so to honor who i am and who brought me here by using lowercase and challenging the grammatical conventions of english. If you have any questions, feel free to email me, i'd love to hear from you.

isaiah kortright
Community Organizing Coordinator
ikortright@tucsonaudubon.org



COMING IN DECEMBER

Tucson Audubon's Annual Holiday Potluck

Join with others in the Southeast Arizona birding community and Tucson Audubon staff to celebrate the birds of the season.

Stay tuned for details!

Sandhill Crane, Dan Weisz

ARIZONA'S ONE-TIME WONDERS



This Lesser Sand-Plover at Round Cedar Lake near Leupp, Coconino County, 2–11 October 2016, represented a first record for Arizona. Photo by Gordon Karre



This Gray-collared Becard discovered in Cave Creek Canyon near Portal, 5 June 2009, provided a first record for Arizona and United States of this Mexican species. Photo by Jillian Johnston



Arizona's first recorded Little Bunting at Slaughter Ranch, Cochise County, 27 May 2017. Photo by Richard E. Webster

While Arizona is a mecca for birdwatching in the United States, and famous for its southwest specialties and hummingbirds, it also has the largest state list of any state that does not border an ocean, or the Gulf of Mexico. The official state list is now an amazing 570 species, and while this high total is made up of about 270 breeding species, and about 150 regular migrant or wintering species, no fewer than another 150 species are considered casual or accidental in the state. Of these, 29 species have occurred in Arizona only once!

Some of these were at least somewhat expected to occur, such as American Woodcock, Sedge Wren, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Connecticut and Cerulean Warblers, and Nelson's Sparrow, as they are long-distance migrants that have occurred, albeit rarely, in neighboring states such as California. Some are "Mexican" species, such as White-tipped Dove, Ringed Kingfisher, Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush, and Black-vented Oriole, that are expanding their ranges, or are known to disperse, and have bred, or at least have occurred in Texas. Other Mexican species, such as Bumblebee and Cinnamon Hummingbirds, and Gray-collared Becard, are more difficult to explain.

One would not necessarily expect that Arizona would produce strays from Asia, but Baikal Teal, Lesser Sand-Plover, Northern Wheatear, and Little Bunting have all occurred. These are long-distance migrants that have occurred on the West Coast, if not the California deserts, and the wheatear and sand-Plover have both strayed all the way to Louisiana and Florida! Occasionally "northern" species stray farther south than usual. We get the occasional Snow Bunting, or Common Redpoll, and that might explain the Harlequin Duck record, but this phenomenon was taken to the extreme with an Ivory Gull record on the Colorado River.

Arizona is only 60 miles from the Gulf of California, and we have gotten numerous strays such as gulls and terns, but also boobies and frigatebirds, and even Laysan Albatross twice! Occasionally, the remnants of a hurricane come up the gulf bringing "oceanic" birds into the desert, mainly Black and Least Storm-Petrels, and once a Black-vented Shearwater, all of which occur in the gulf. Amazingly, one storm (Hurricane Newton) brought numerous Wedge-rumped Storm-Petrels, and even more crazily, a Wedge-tailed Shearwater and a Juan Fernandez Petrel. The Petrel was a new record for the United States, and all of these birds had to originate in the Pacific Ocean south of Baja! Two species, a Hawaiian Petrel found dead in Yuma, and a White-tailed Tropicbird found dead in Phoenix, were apparently not brought to Arizona by storms, and are two of the more amazing birds to occur in the state.

Then there is a set of mostly "Eastern" species that are extraordinary. Old specimens of Anhinga from 1883, and Eastern Whip-poor-will from 1952 are strange records of species that have not been found again in the state, but they have also occurred in California at least once or twice. Not so for Acadian Flycatcher, known from Arizona from a specimen collected in 1886, a Black-capped Vireo netted and banded in 1970, and the Swainson's Warbler in 1981, that still is the only record of that species west of the Continental divide!

Looking for rarities in Arizona has become a passion for many. It is always fun to try to predict what new species will occur in Arizona, but it's also fun to try and find another of these one-time wonders!

Gary Rosenberg is Secretary of the Arizona Bird Committee and co-author of the season bar graphs section of *Finding Birds in Southeast Arizona*.



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Northern Cardinals, Matthew Studebaker

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BACKYARD BIRDS



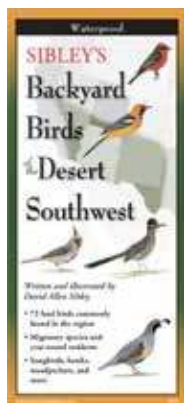
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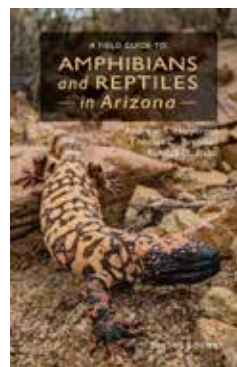
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By Rick Taylor
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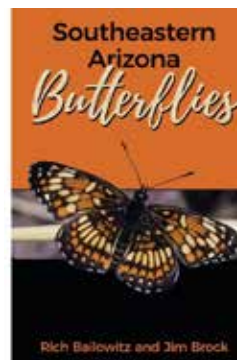
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By Rich Bailowitz and Jim Brock
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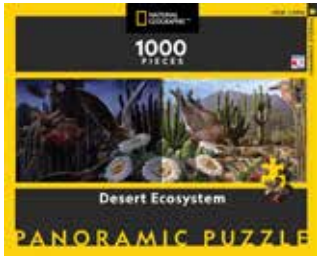


NATURAL LANDMARKS OF ARIZONA

By David Yetman
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The 12th annual Southeast Arizona Birding Festival recorded the most bird species of any year (241) and together with our venue (the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel at Reid Park), community partners, sponsors, and volunteers, we created a welcoming environment that inspired people to take the next steps in enjoying and protecting birds. This year we debuted the festival scholarship program, partnered with the Arizona State School for the Deaf and the Blind on a morning birding field trip for students, and continued to expand our field trip offerings led by the best field trip leaders you'll ever meet.

We hope you will join us next year, **AUGUST 9-13, 2023**, to celebrate the birds and birding community of Southeast Arizona.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Pincushion cactus, Robert Gallardo; Field trip, Robert Gallardo; Berylline Hummingbird, Richard Fray; Luke Safford with the species checklist, Matt Griffiths; Banquet dinner, Richard Fray; Olya Weekley and Jennie MacFarland doing Purple Martin work, Karen Howe

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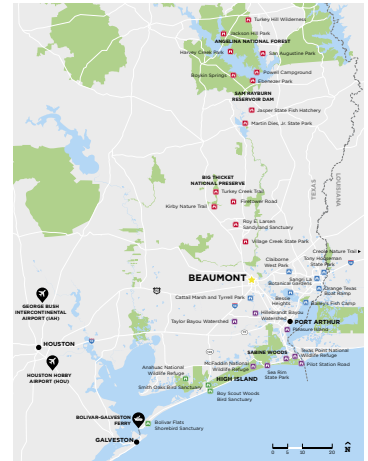
SUPPORTING



CONTRIBUTING



Beaumont, is located on two of the four migratory flyways in the U.S., the Central and Mississippi. Thanks to its unique position near the Gulf of Mexico, there are 28 Great Texas Coastal Birding trails within a 40-mile radius of the city. The American Birding Association call it one of the most interesting avifaunal conferences in the country.



Plan Your Trip

DAY 1

Cattail Marsh Wetlands

With 900 acres of scenic wetlands, Cattail Marsh is a repurposed wastewater treatment facility.

Tony Houseman State Park

A 600-foot boardwalk leads from the Visitor Information Center into the Swamp.

Shangri La Botanical Garden

A 262-acre preserve that includes upland forests, cypress / tupelo swamps, and Adams Bayou.



DAY 2

Big Thicket National Preserve

A convergence of ecosystems ranging from longleaf pine forests to cypress rimmed bayous.

Sam Rayburn Reservoir Dam

A stark contrast from the forest cover and attracting water birds in droves.

Angelina National Forest

One of only four national forests in Texas with 150,000+ acres.

Boykin Springs

Find Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and Bachman's Sparrows here.

DAY 3

Sea Rim State Park

Skirting the gulf with access to salt marsh, sand dunes, and an open Gulf habitat.

Sabine Woods

A shining example of chenier plain woodlot that attracts migrants in droves.

Pleasure Island

Wander the levee roads and scope the concentrations of birds.

Sabine Pass

Marshes along the coast good for year round birding.

DAY 4

Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge


one of the most-visit sites of American birding, 34,000 acres of marsh, prairie, and scattered woods.

High Island

High Island showcases the *Smith Oaks Rookery*, that has become a favored roosting and nesting place, and the infamous *Boy Scout Woods* a globally important bird area.

Bolivar Flats

Bolivar Flats produce the most consistent phenomenal birding in the area with impressive migration counts.






Natural Selections



BIRDING, WILDLIFE, AND PHOTO TOURS

SUPPORTING LOCAL GUIDES AND CONSERVATION THROUGH NATURE TRAVEL

Birding Tours to Honduras, Guatemala, Peru and more
WildlifeTours to India, Sri Lanka, Borneo and more
Photo Tours to Kenya, Brazil, Ecuador and more

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CREOLE NATURE TRAIL visitthatcharles.org/creole-nature-trail/



GALVESTON ISLAND galveston.com/whatto-do/outdoorfun/birding/



RIO GRAND VALLEY rgvtd.org/



A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Born and raised in Sonora Mexico, I grew up with minimal exposure to environmental education. My time spent outdoors was limited to my grandma’s small backyard, hanging out by El Guayabo (guava trees) and digging in the dirt to find cool rocks. My family is not a particularly outdoorsy bunch. Coming to Tucson when I was 12, I could tell there was a big sense of community and everyone spent a ton of time outside. It was odd for me to see! I could tell there were young people really into the outdoors, but I saw them as the “science kids.” I was not a great student, and I was definitely not a science kid. It wasn’t until my 20s that I got to go on my first hike ever; a hike that really opened up my eyes to the beauty of Mother Nature, particularly the beauty of Tucson and the mountains that stand tall in the Tohono O’odham and Pascua Yaqui ancestral lands. It was in these mountains I found a place to heal and learn at the same time. It was then that I realized that advocating and caring for Mother Earth is as much for the science kid as it is for the math kid, for the music kid, and for every kid. This is why I am so committed to being an environmental educator!

I believe that education should be liberating, engaging and exciting. It should also be reciprocal, where we, as educators and facilitators, also learn from the students. Our goal in redeveloping the youth education program at Tucson Audubon is to make meaningful connections with teachers so that we may develop lessons that are not only rich in information, but that also bring us to corners of learning that we have yet to explore. I will prioritize diversifying our education curricula, bringing a more equitable approach to teaching by offering our resources to the entire community. This crucial goal invites the expertise and perspectives of everyone to our conservation work, especially those who are the most affected by climate change, habitat degradation, and the disruption of our ecosystem.

Bea Mendivil
 Education Coordinator
 bmendivil@tucsonaudubon.org



FAMILY BIRDING DAY AT THE SOUTHEAST ARIZONA BIRDING FESTIVAL

Festival season is a busy and exciting time at Tucson Audubon. The education department was excited to put together a fun-filled day for families and young kids as part of this year’s festival. We gathered near Barnum Hill, the vibrant heart of Reid Park where families, birds, and other species come together to enjoy the shady oasis.



Groups of kids enjoyed a short walk around the pond guided by our fantastic volunteers. The kids were able to spot many species that were on our birding Lotería cards (a Mexican card game similar to bingo) with the Neotropic Cormorant being a crowd favorite.

Along with the walk, kids enjoyed interactive activities showcasing the “super abilities” of vultures. The kids were excited to share the news with their friends about vultures being our cleanup crew in the wild and how “cool” vultures are. We were excited to recruit young conservation advocates to Team Vulture and Team Bird!



Enjoying the birds of Reid Park, Joanna Strohn

TALENTED TEAMWORK CREATES FESTIVAL SUCCESS

The Southeast Arizona Birding Festival is our largest annual event, known for its field trips, workshops, social events, and Nature Expo. To me, though, it's also known for being our largest volunteer event of the year.

This year, 114 people volunteered over 900 hours of their time to the festival. This is the highest number of festival volunteers ever! I am absolutely blown away by those numbers and can't possibly express enough gratitude to everyone who helped out.

If you enjoyed seeing a hummingbird on a feeder at the DoubleTree this year, Peggy Steffens and Andrea Serrano are to thank! They set up the feeders ten days in advance and maintained them throughout the festival.



Taylor Rubin
Volunteer Program & Engagement Coordinator
trubin@tucsonaudubon.org



Andrea Serrano hanging a hummingbird feeder at the DoubleTree, Joanna Strohn



Tina Whitecotton checking her list next to a bevy of coolers ready to be loaded into vans, Joanna Strohn



Kathy Balman with a group of Family Birding Day attendees checking off their Bingo cards at Reid Park, Joanna Strohn

One of the most complicated and physically-demanding volunteer positions at the festival is that of van leader. Our van leaders this year were Donito Burgess, Linda Matson, Daniel Clark, Hollie Mansfield, and Matt Vandzura. I also can't forget to mention everyone on the Morning Van Crew and the Van Prep Crew who helped ensure everything ran smoothly. These positions are usually difficult to fill (4am wake up call and 100+ degree weather?), so I am extra grateful to those who stepped up.

Although you may have seen many of the van volunteers, you likely did not see the dedicated team of volunteers responsible for the food and snacks on field trips, for volunteers, and for our exhibitors. Cynthia VerDuin and Tina Whitecotton deserve a round of applause for the months-long planning that went into making sure every trip had what they needed. Also Chris Bittle, Anita Jones, and Connie Cannady stepped in to make sure every cooler was packed and every water jug was filled.

If you participated in any of the workshops during the festival, you likely met volunteer Dorothy Fitch. Every year, she makes sure that presenters are set up for success, that all A/V equipment is working, and that attendees get checked in.

Not all volunteer work happened on site at the DoubleTree. Lissie Jaquette organized the Hoots, Herps, and Hops event at Sabino Canyon/Three Canyon Brewery for the second year in a row and Deb Vath, Kathy Balman, Rowyn Balman, and Daniel Barajas helped make the off-site Family Birding Day a huge success!

Finally, these photos come courtesy of our extraordinary volunteer photographer, Joanna Strohn. Thank you, Joanna, for capturing so many incredible moments.

Although I can't fit every name into this publication, I appreciate each and every person who volunteered. Thank you so much for making an impact, and I can't wait to see you all again next year.

FIELD TRIP LEADER TRAINING

Do you have a passion for sharing the love of birds with others? Have you ever wanted to lead a bird walking trip? This fall, Tucson Audubon will be holding its second field trip leader training program! The program will offer participants comprehensive field training and graduates will join our active group of leaders and lead their very own trips for the Tucson community. Find full program dates and details and apply at [TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/FIELDTRIPS](https://tucsonaudubon.org/fieldtrips) or reach out to our Community Engagement Coordinator, Kirsten Howe at khowe@tucsonaudubon.org with questions.

We'd love to welcome more people to the Tucson Audubon volunteer team! If you are interested in learning more, please visit [TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/VOLUNTEER](https://tucsonaudubon.org/volunteer).

GARDENS ON THE GREEN WORKSHOP SERIES

Are you looking to create lush and productive wildlife habitat at your home to attract birds and other wildlife? Join us for a series of five free workshops and you'll be well on your way!

10–11 am at the Joyner-Green Valley Library, 601 N La Cañada Dr, Green Valley, AZ 85614.

Workshops are free to attend and no registration is required.

October 6 BACKYARD ECOLOGY: REALIZING YOUR HOME'S POTENTIAL FOR WILDLIFE

Do you want to attract more wildlife to your yard, but don't know where to start? We will give you the tools to evaluate your existing habitat and provide insight on how to maximize it.

October 13 PLANTS FOR SOUTHEAST ARIZONA: SELECTING PLANTS TO MEET YOUR HABITAT GOALS

We'll help you find the right plants for your home habitat. Meet a few of our favorites, learn some pro planting tips, and leave with new resources to help you create a palette unique to your goals.

October 20 IRRIGATION: AN INTRODUCTION TO RAINWATER HARVESTING AND DRIP SYSTEMS

Quality habitat begins with irrigation. Keep your plants thriving with rainwater harvesting or learn to supplement with drip systems.

October 27 POLLINATOR GARDENS: A GUIDE TO POLLINATOR CONSERVATION IN YOUR BACKYARD

Explore how you can support and sustain the variety of pollinators that are native to Southeast Arizona. Learn about their specific needs for food, shelter, nesting, and water, all while creating a beautiful space in your yard.

November 3 SHELTER AND WATER: MEETING ALL THE NEEDS OF YOUR BACKYARD VISITORS

Complete your habitat by providing water and shelter. Learn about the various types of nestboxes suited to our local birds and explore a variety of water feature options.



A small effort can make a big difference in your landscaping, Erica Freese

ARIZONA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS



The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird species and individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive ornithological database that enables monitoring of winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

All skill levels welcome! Help is needed on all of these counts, so find one (or more) that interests you and contact the compiler to join a team. **Check TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/CBC for the latest on count dates and compilers.**

TUCSON AND SOUTHEAST ARIZONA COUNTS

TUCSON VALLEY

The Tucson Valley Christmas Bird Count will celebrate its 51st year in 2022!

SANTA CATALINA MOUNTAINS

The count circle encompasses Tanque Verde Creek, Summerhaven, Sabino and Ventana Canyons, and Redington Pass.

AVRA VALLEY

PATAGONIA

SAFFORD

NOGALES

ST. DAVID

ATASCOSA HIGHLANDS

RAMSEY CANYON

BUENOS-AIRES NWR

GREEN VALLEY-MADERA CANYON

PORTAL

DUDLEYVILLE

APPLETON-WHITTELL

AJO-CABEZA PRIETA

LUKEVILLE

ORGAN PIPE CACTUS NM

ADDITIONAL ARIZONA COUNTS

SALT-VERDE RIVERS

PRESCOTT

HAVASU NWR

GILA RIVER

BILL WILLIAMS RIVER NWR

SEDONA

HASSAYAMPA RIVER

JEROME

GRAND CANYON

CHINO VALLEY

PHOENIX-TRES RIOS

SUPERIOR

PHOENIX METRO

CAREFREE

FLAGSTAFF-MOUNT ELDEN

TIMBER MESA

CAMP VERDE

PAYSON

LAKE PLEASANT

MORMON LAKE

TONTO NM-ROOSEVELT LAKE

GLEN CANYON

MARTINEZ LAKE-YUMA

WILLOW BEACH, TBD



REGISTER ONLINE AND FIND DETAILS AT:
TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/NEWS-EVENTS

Looking to create lush and productive wildlife habitat at your home to attract birds and other wildlife? See our Gardens on the Green Workshop Series on the previous page.

Saturday thru Monday, October 8–10

IN-PERSON EVENT: FALL NATIVE PLANT SALE at the Mason Center
Get some native plants to start or improve your habitat at home and benefit our Sonoran Desert wildlife. Show up at 9 am on Saturday for a garden walk to see some of the sale plants in action! See TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG/HABITAT for details and sale hours.

Saturday, October 8, time TBD

IN-PERSON EVENT: CELEBRATION OF WORLD MIGRATORY BIRD DAY!

Tuesday, October 11, 11 am–12 pm

VIRTUAL PRESENTATION: BIRDERS & THE BALLOT BOX: TURNING OUT THE ENVIRONMENTAL VOTE | Presenter: David Robinson, TAS Conservation Advocate

Saturday, October 15, 6:30–11:30 am

IN-PERSON EVENT: BIRDING & CANVASSING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL VOTER PROJECT, location TBD
Join us for a first-of-its-kind Birding and Canvassing event series! We'll start with a morning birding stroll followed by door-knocking in a Tucson neighborhood to help mobilize low propensity environmental voters to vote in their upcoming elections.

Tuesday, October 18, 11 am–12 pm

VIRTUAL PRESENTATION: BIRDING ADVENTURES IN SOUTH AFRICA | Presenter: Luke Safford

Thursday, October 20, 4:30–8 pm

IN-PERSON SOCIAL: BIRDS N BEER with Feminist Bird Club of Tucson
Join us for an evening of birds, beer, and fun with other birders, as we bird Fort Lowell Park followed by a drink at the Tucson Hop Shop! This event is being cosponsored by the Feminist Bird Club of Tucson.

Saturday, October 29, 6:30–11:30 am

IN-PERSON EVENT: BIRDING & CANVASSING WITH ENVIRONMENTAL VOTER PROJECT, location TBD

Monday, October 31, 7–8 pm

VIRTUAL SOCIAL: BIRDS 'N' BEER—RARE & INTERESTING BIRDS IN SE ARIZONA | Host: Luke Safford

Wednesday, November 2, 11 am–12 pm

VIRTUAL WORKSHOP: THE ART & ETHICS OF WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHY with Hunt's Photo | Presenter: Theodore Emery
Photographer Theodore Emery will discuss ways to get yourselves into unique situations with wildlife and offer new methods to deepen your understanding of how birds interact with various habitats and how to ethically and mindfully move through wild landscapes to leave minimal impact.



Northern Parula, Greg Lavaty

Thursday, November 3, 6–8 pm

IN-PERSON SOCIAL: BIRDS 'N' BINGO at Bawker Bawker Cider House
Come out to Bawker Bawker Cider House for some birds, brews, and bingo! Put your bird ID knowledge to the test, compete to win sweet birdy prizes, and sip some of the best cider in town with your friends from Tucson Audubon.

Friday, November 11, 11 am–12 pm

VIRTUAL CLASS: TIPS ON IDENTIFYING BIRDS | Host: Luke Safford

Thursday, November 17, 11 am–12 pm

VIRTUAL PRESENTATION: ANALYZING THE RESULTS OF THE 2022 ELEGANT TROGON SURVEYS | Presenter: Jennie MacFarland

Monday, November 28, 7–8pm

VIRTUAL SOCIAL: BIRDS 'N' BEER—RARE & INTERESTING BIRDS IN SE ARIZONA | Host: Luke Safford

Friday, December 2, 11am–12pm

VIRTUAL PRESENTATION: HOW TO MAKE MOST OF YOUR CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT | Presenters: Jennie MacFarland and Troy Corman of the AZ Field Ornithologists

Tuesday, December 13, 11am–12pm

VIRTUAL CLASS: BIRDING THE CALENDAR—WHERE TO GO BIRDING IN WINTER | Instructor: Luke Safford
This season offers a fantastic time to find wintering birds like Mountain Plovers, longspurs, and Ferruginous Hawks, and many duck and waterfowl species.

WOO HOOT!

BIRDY NEWS BITES WORTH CELEBRATING

HABITAT ON WHEELS IS READY TO ROLL!

The Habitat at Home program has been awarded \$42,100 from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's 5 Star and Urban Waters Restoration program for their "Habitat on Wheels" project. Funding will allow us to increase urban bird habitat in areas most impacted by increased temperatures associated with urban heat island effects in Tucson and Southeast Arizona while engaging with communities and making birding opportunities more accessible to a greater number of people. This innovative approach of utilizing a mobile display unit to deliver plants and information to our local communities will leverage established assets of Tucson Audubon and enhance our positive impacts in Southeast Arizona.



SAVING OUR SONORAN SAGUAROS BEGINS PLANTING

Last month the Tucson Audubon restoration department planted 36 saguaros at the Mason Center. These are the first of 14,000 total saguaros to be planted across three overlapping projects dealing with revegetation after the Bighorn and Bush wildfires and regional climate adaptation. Planting nursery grown saguaros in these settings is key to jumpstarting their re-establishment in a healthy Sonoran Desert that can be enjoyed by future generations and will benefit over 100 total native species including 14 species of birds like Gila Woodpeckers, Elf Owls, and desert Purple Martins.



Habitat at Home, Matt Griffiths; Gila Woodpecker, Francis Morgan

GIFTS IN HONOR OR MEMORY OF

- In memory of Barbara Cain from Bam Miller & Kevin Dahl
- In honor of Beth Acree from Donna Reed
- In honor of Caleb Strand from Colleen Dugan
- In honor of Catherine Bartlett from Jessica Hill
- In honor of Emma Jean Neal from Ann Peterson
- In memory of Jack Walker from Marya Wheeler
- In honor of Jim Hoagland from Robert Bedotto
- In honor of Joachim Haase from Carolin Atchison
- In honor of Julia Gordon from the Windibrow Foundation
- In honor of Marcy Shiffer from Cynthia & Bill VerDuin
- In memory of Michael Morgan from Bob Krist, Lynn Hassler, and Martin Levy
- In memory of Michele Miller from Cheryl Heitz
- In honor of Nancy & Norman Karp from Jordan Karp & Paul Bowden
- In memory of Norma Hart Anderson from Pam & Stan Hart
- In honor of Tom Woodworth from Lisa Sackett



Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Shawn Cooper

MOLTING OUR DIGITAL PLUMAGE

For many bird species, a natural part of the life cycle is molting. Moving from natal plumage to juvenile plumage to the recognizable coloration and patterns of adulthood is part of the beauty of growing up. And molting isn't just phases of life: as old feathers get worn down, they need to be replaced with newer, healthier ones.

By the time you read this issue of *Vermilion Flycatcher*, you may have already noticed some “digital molting” going on at TUCSONAUDUBON.ORG. We've been working behind the scenes to present some new plumage of our own on our website. The colors, the typefaces, the text choices and the

images we share are all different now. We've replaced some of the worn down content and replaced it with newer, more relevant pages. Our hope is that the site is more readable, that the information you need is easier to find, and that it's all a little more vibrant and fun.

Birds in molt can sometimes sport some awkward appearances until the process is complete. While we don't think the new website will be too patchy or scruffy, we apologize if you catch us with a bare spot while we finish up the migration. We'd love to hear what you think of our new look!

Ethan Myerson
 Director of Development and Communications
 emyerson@tucsonaudubon.org



Vermilion Flycatcher coming into its adult male plumage, Cathy Wasson

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This winter, you and Tucson Audubon Society can take to the skies together. With your support of our Winter Appeal, we can soar higher than ever: protecting precious habitat, advocating for environmental justice, and sharing our love of birds with a new generation of birders.