

Blackhawk Watch

Newsletter of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society

TM Volume XLIX • Number 4 • March - April 2021



March Program Flagstaff and Sedona Zoom and Facebook Live

March 23, 2021

Time: 7:00 pm (Tuesday)

Location: Zoom and Facebook Live

(links are in NAAS emails, eblasts and on the website
northernarizonaaudubon.org)

Name of presenter: Scott Johnson



Scott Johnson is Canadian-born but immigrated with his parents to the Twin Cities of Minnesota at a young age. At age 13, he became an avid birder after delighting in seeing the different birds that came to a rickety bird feeder he built. He obtained a B.A. from St. Olaf College and later a Master's in Zoology at Northern Arizona University in 1984. His thesis research at NAU, done under Dr. Russ Balda, examined the

function of song in what was then called the "Plain Titmouse." Romance then took him to the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains in Wyoming. He eventually completed a Ph.D. at the University of Calgary and became Professor of Ornithology and Animal Behavior at Towson University in Baltimore, but always returned to Wyoming each spring to do bird research. His work has focused on the reproductive biology and behavior of songbirds. For two decades he studied House Wrens before turning his attention to the Mountain Bluebird. He is now retired and living near Sedona where he continues various ornithological pursuits.

Title of program: Why Mountain Bluebirds
lay the number of eggs they do



Why birds lay the number of eggs they do is one of the most long-standing and debated questions in ornithology. The normal differs, of course, between species, e.g., hummers typically lay 2 eggs, robins and shorebirds lay 4 eggs, while chickadees lay 8 eggs or more. Mountain Bluebird females usually lay 6 eggs. Clutches of 7 eggs occur, but they are very rare. The question arises then: Why do females almost

always stop at 6 eggs? If they are capable of laying 7 eggs, why not lay 7 and thus produce more offspring? Scott will describe a field experiment that he and his students did trying to answer this question. They tested a hypothesis that, while quite logical, has received strikingly little attention from ornithologists: "Female birds lay only as many eggs as they can effectively incubate." Do females only lay 6 eggs because it is too difficult to incubate 7 eggs? Before describing the experiment and its results, Scott will give an overview of the biology and behavior of the Mountain Bluebird in the high country of Wyoming.



April Program Flagstaff and Sedona Zoom and Facebook Live

April 27, 2021

Time: 7:00 pm (Tuesday)

Location: Zoom and Facebook Live

(links are in NAAS emails, eblasts and on the website
northernarizonaaudubon.org)

Name of presenter: Dan Daggett



Dan Daggett has written two books on the topic of his upcoming talk on ranchers and environmentalists working together. The first, *Beyond the Rangeland Conflict: Toward a West That Works*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize and has been recognized as one of the most important books written about the American West. His second book, *Gardeners of Eden, Rediscovering*

Our Importance To Nature, inspired reviews just as outstanding. Daggett has been active as an environmentalist since the 1970s, helping to form an Audubon-linked group in Ohio plus a local group (SORE — Save Our Rural Environment) that succeeded in halting strip mining for coal in the county where the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) was founded. Upon moving to Arizona in 1980, he served as co-coordinator for northern Arizona of the Sierra Club's "Adopt a Wilderness" program that helped get the Arizona Wilderness Act of 1984 passed by Congress. His first article, which dealt with the threat posed by uranium mining in the vicinity of Grand Canyon National Park, was published in the national Sierra Club Magazine. In 1992, Daggett received an "Environmental Hero" award by the Sierra Club for its John Muir Centennial celebration as one of the top 100 grass roots environmental activists in America. In light of all of the above, Daggett has been enlisted to give presentations from Idaho to New Mexico, from California to Maine and now to Cottonwood.

Title of program: How ranchers are helping save grassland
birds

I'm looking forward to sharing my photos and experiences giving a local (Verde River) perspective on the spring 2017 issue of the Audubon Magazine article *How Cattle Ranchers Are Helping to Save Western Grasslands and Birds*. Specifically, I will present information on the exceptional results that that can be (and have been) achieved to this end in Arizona and around the West using what is called "regenerative method grazing." Ranchers who apply this method manage their cattle in ways that mimic the interactions between native or wild grazing animals and their habitat. What they have been able to achieve is definitely surprising and hopeful.



LIVE

PROGRAMS FOR FLAGSTAFF AND SEDONA
MARCH AND APRIL WILL BE ON FACEBOOK LIVE



President's Message

By Kay Hawkee

COVID-19 has changed bird watching. Until we finally put the disease behind us, these will continue to be ways we cope. The most obvious change is that feeder watching has increased exponentially. This is good for birds and people as a study published by Cornell in the Winter 2021 issue of *Living Bird* suggests: **Urban Feeders May Be Havens for Rural Birds During Harsh Winter Weather**, by Marc Devokaitis.

COVID-19 has forced less reliance on guides and more reliance on field guide books. That means slowing down, taking more time with unknown species and numerous trips to the same bird sanctuary. It's a free gift we can give ourselves.

There has been an **explosion** of educational and scientific content on virtual platforms about birds and their

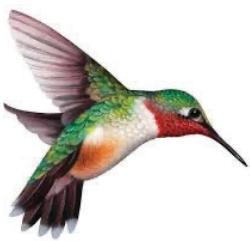
behavior. We've intentionally been publishing many links to bird-related sites with programs that can keep you connected and expand your knowledge.

NAAS and most chapters have moved programs to Zoom and Facebook live. At NAAS, we are ready to up our Social Media game. Over the upcoming year we will become more active on Facebook and other platforms.

When we do begin to have more of a presence on Social Media, we invite more of your comments! Sadly, we've all been so cut off from each other. It's important that we know more about birds, but we also want to know more about you.

Please speak up on our Social Media platforms. Don't be exceptionally secretive like a rail – any rail. Or shy and difficult like a Hermit Warbler. Or skulky and evasive like the smallest Heron - Least Bittern - who in late April can be heard doing that deep-throated chuckle at Dead Horse, Lagoon 3, South end. Let's all speak up and share the fun with each other! Don't be shy!

NAS Action Alert



Birds are telling us that it is time to act. We are living in a climate emergency. The National Audubon Society has research showing that bird species such as the Rufous Hummingbird are threatened. Join in pledging to stand with Audubon in protecting birds from the threats of climate change. Follow this link to Audubon's Action Center to sign a petition: <http://lil.ms/8ir0/80qyq6>

Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN)

The Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN) is Audubon's multi-state grassroots effort to protect rivers. WRAN members advocate for "conservation actions that maintain river and groundwater levels, enhance the health of our environment, restore valuable habitat, and promote reliable water supplies for humans, birds, fish, and wildlife."

Western rivers - such as the Verde River - are at risk. Ongoing drought and demand of groundwater are triggering declines in water supply as well as declines in cottonwood-willow galleries and native marsh river habitat. Most of the birds in the Verde Valley depend on the Verde River and its vibrant habitat. Birds such as the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Bell's Vireo and Southwest Willow Flycatcher are in decline. However, together we can help. Join WRAN and speak up for water conservation and birds. Help protect all of our western rivers and the birds that depend on this diminishing habitat. If you have never been, take a day to drive to the Upper Verde River Wildlife Area. NAAS has conducted bird surveys there for Bell's Vireo, Yellow-breasted Chat, Yellow Warbler and Summer Tanager as part of the Western Rivers Bird Count. It's truly a magical place!

Northern Arizona Audubon Society
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 Tell your friends

Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival (VVBNF) 2021

This year's Friends of the Verde River birding festival (VVBNF) is a hybrid event—part in person and part virtually. NAAS is a supporter-partner each year of the festival. Many NAAS members are field trip leaders, workshop speakers, board members, and festival volunteers. This year is no different. While there are less field trips this year, there are a larger number of informative speakers and workshops. You can log in from any place to enjoy the 15+ live presentations, bird call quizzes, and bird walks. There will also be virtual Armchair Birding at Dead Horse Ranch State Park.

But you must register. The virtual package is just \$30 flat and gives you a week to watch the recordings. In addition, Friends will continue to offer limited, in-person size-limited guided tours throughout the state and will have a set of mandatory safety guidelines to better keep all attendees safe! These tours will vary in price based upon the duration of the tour.

Dates: April 22-25, 2021. Sign up online on the Friends website starting March 1st at <https://verderiver.org/birding-festival/>. See the Friends of the Verde River Facebook page to follow along and add your bird sightings. <https://verderiver.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/birdfestmainhorizontallogotransparent.png>



Northern Arizona Audubon Society Mission Statement
To promote the understanding and appreciation of birds and other wildlife and the conservation and restoration of their natural habitats.



Yardie Award Recipients Announcement



Congratulations to our latest Yardie Award recipients: Shari and John Argent of Cornville. They have counted 25 species in their yard. They chose the Anna's Hummingbird for the photo on their certificate -- a photo that Shari took herself.



2020 Yavapai County Birding Records and Sightings

By Rich Armstrong

Even though it was a lousy 2020 in many ways it was actually an excellent year for birds. The record for bird species seen in Yavapai County was 288. Janie Stewart and Heather Hofling slaughtered that record as Janie ended with 303 and Heather 300. Others from the Verde Valley in the top 10 for 2020 were Jonathan Montgomery #5 with 241, Kay Hawkee #7 with 225, Rich Armstrong #8 with 223, and Lisa Grubbs #10 with 219. Amazing birds this year included Ring-necked Pheasant (found by Patti Greenelatch), Northern Goshawk, Yellow-throated Warbler (found by Rob Gibbs), Pectoral & Stilt Sandpipers, Surf & White-winged Scoters, Eurasian Wigeon, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Ruddy Ground Doves (Whit Manter and Greg Johnson yards), Red Phalarope (1st Yavapai record), American Tree Sparrow (1st Yavapai record), Sanderlings (Sedona Wetlands & Heather Hofling found other at McGuireville), Chestnut-sided Warbler, Northern Parula (Janie Stewart's yard), Golden-crowned Sparrow (Heather Hofling's yard), two Yellow-throated Vireos, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Clay-colored Sparrow (Greg Johnson's yard), and many more. Kip & Laura Stransky had 128 yard birds for 2020, which might be a record for yard birds in a year for Yavapai County.

May 2021 yield many more rare birds!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Good Birding!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

For the Love of Birds Festival 2021 Summary

By Jenny Barnes

This inspiring and informative virtual festival was worth every dollar. Kristi Dranginis of Bird Mentor.com is a skilled interviewer, asking great questions of each speaker and actively listening. During the interviews, even on video, she made it seem like we were sitting in a friend's home with our coffee—and we were, hers! The 13 speakers (averaging out to less than \$1 per hour for the price of \$12) are leaders in their areas of expertise.

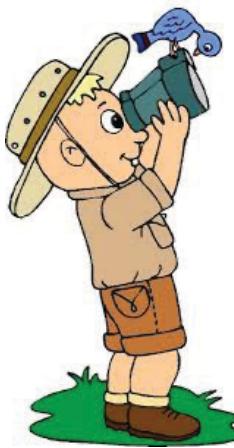
My favorite speakers were John Muir Laws who talked about how nature journaling helps us be more observant and curious about nature. Also, George Bumann, wildlife ecologist and sculptor who lives in Gardiner near Yellowstone Park, discussed animal communication topics. He is fun to listen to and watch when he does Raven imitations with such enthusiasm. Richard Crossley, of *The Crossley ID Guide* series, described how difficult it was to physically hold up to his first ID Guide production, from the computer work to handling the equipment for capturing thousands of images in the field. I have a greater appreciation now for my *Crossley's ID Guide--Raptors*. Others included Dr. Pepper Trail (forensic ornithologist, National Fish and Wildlife Service, who created The Feather Atlas <https://www.fws.gov/lab/featheratlas/index.php>). And the popular author Julie Zickefoose of *Bird Watcher's Digest* shared about writing a book *Saving Jemina: Life and Love with a Hard-Luck Jay*.

For an extra \$47 there was a VIP pass that had Q and A Zoom sessions with speakers, deep dive sessions (exclusive bonus classes), downloadable notes, and unlimited lifetime access to some of this material. Be sure to mark your calendars for next year.



Bird Sightings

By Rich Armstrong

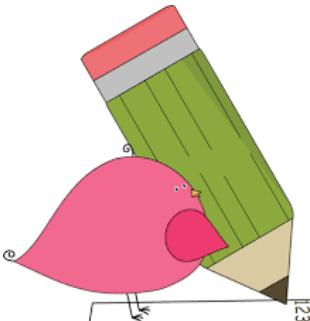


Birding has continued despite no NAAS field trips. Lawrence's Goldfinches continue to be seen at the Sedona Wetlands. Cassin's Finches seem to be everywhere. Further afield four Sandhill Cranes were regular at Willow Lake in Prescott. Six Snow Geese, including a Blue Goose, as well as many Wilson's Snipes have been seen by many on Bates Road. Tim Weber found a male Broad-billed Hummingbird on Chuckwalla Drive in Cottonwood, which is also an excellent place for Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Canyon Towhee.



Shorthand for Bird Names

By Jenny Barnes



If you have seen acronyms that refer to bird species, and wondered what they are, here is the answer. Many birders use these acronyms instead of spelling out the complete common name or scientific name.

The Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) maintains the lists of these acronyms to reflect the current American Ornithological Society checklist.

The alphabetic (alpha) codes are standardized abbreviations of English or Scientific (Latin) bird names that are used by ornithologists as shorthand.

English Common Names are four letters. Scientific (Latin) names are six letters. For example, the common name American Robin is AMRO, and its scientific name *Turdus migratorius* is TURMIG.

Please refer to this website page for the complete lists.
<https://www.birdpop.org/pages/birdSpeciesCodes.php>

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New Kiosk at Kachina Wetlands

By Christina Vojta - Kachina Wetlands Steward

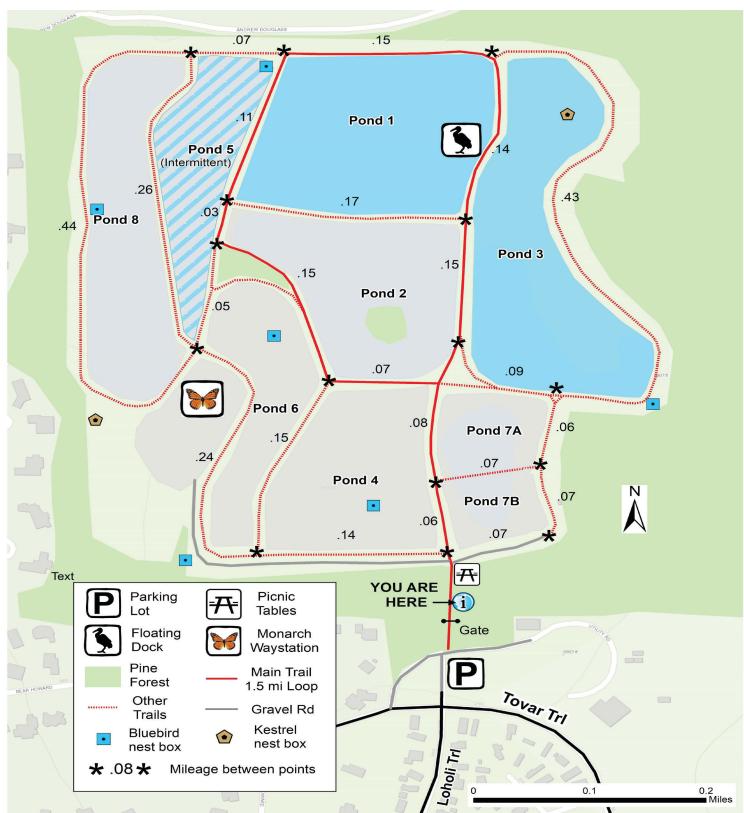
The 20-yr-old display case at the entrance to Kachina Wetlands has been replaced with a spiffy new one, funded by Northern Arizona Audubon. Similar to the original case, the new kiosk provides three adjacent panels that are covered with tempered glass and are lockable. Unlike the tattered old case, this one is waterproof. The edge of the kiosk has a pocket to store tri-fold pamphlets of the Kachina Wetlands bird checklist for public use.

The left panel contains a poster that welcomes the public to Kachina Wetlands and describes the collaborative relationship between Kachina Village Improvement District (the landowner) and Northern Arizona Audubon. The right panel displays a map of the wetlands with the locations of kestrel and bluebird nest boxes, the floating observation deck, and other features. This panel also provides basic information about our other bird sanctuaries.

The center panel will feature information about Northern Arizona Audubon, including announcements of upcoming general meetings and featured speakers, the QR code for instant cell phone access to our Audubon website, and information about the kestrel and bluebird nest boxes. Just for kicks, we plan to feature a "Bird of the Month" that has been recently seen at the wetlands, with a QR code so that anyone can report a sighting of that species. Rather than feature rare species, we plan to feature ones that are easily spotted so that casual visitors to the wetlands can increase their appreciation of birds and can have fun looking for them.

A hearty "thank you" to Audubon member Rob Gibbs, who developed the excellent map of Kachina Wetlands. I also thank NAAS vice-president Dennis Tomko for taking the lead on researching and ordering the kiosk. Dennis also did most of the layout for the posters and QR codes. I played a minor role by providing text for the Welcome poster and input to the map and general layout.

I plan to make a poster each month for "Bird of the Month." That's the fun part, right? If any of you would like to help out with that, simply pick a favorite bird species of Kachina Wetlands, write some text (around 150 words), and send it to me at christina.d.vojta@gmail.com. If you have a photo you want to use, please send that also. I look forward to ideas of birds to feature.





Staying Connected at Northern Arizona Audubon Society

Here's how we are staying connected at **Northern Arizona Audubon Society (NAAS)**. Tell your friends too:

Website: <http://www.northernarizonaaudubon.org>

In addition to visiting the website, you can subscribe to get updates about new content and articles.

Eblast emails from NAAS



Facebook: Northern Arizona Audubon Society (check this page frequently for updates)
National Audubon Society is at <https://www.audubon.org>

And if you have a story or article that you would like to share, the BlackHawk Watch newsletter is published September, November, January, March and May. Articles are welcome from members and non-members. Send proposed articles to Jenny Barnes at naaspub@gmail.com. The deadline for copy is the 15th of the month.

NAAS Bird Walks/Field Trips are cancelled. Please read the Eblasts for continuing information.

Here are some links to interesting websites that you can visit until we can go out in the field together again!

<https://www.birdnote.org/>

This is a public media program that brings hope and joy to people with two minute shows each day, as well as podcasts

<https://www.allaboutbirds.org/news/how-to-make-these-next-few-weeks-a-little-easier-courtesy-of-birds/>

This website page has live cams and Virtual birding Around the World with videos, quizzes and sounds for those times when we are staying at home.

And instead of reading about birding, why not write some news of your own? We would enjoy hearing your birding stories to entertain and encourage others. Topics could include how you started birding. Did you have a spark bird? What would you consider your strongest interest or expertise and what resources or tools did you learn from? Where are your favorite birding spots or vacations that you have enjoyed most? Do you have a story about tracking down a rare bird? And of course, there is always the interesting backyard bird watching story and how you have made your home landscapes attractive to birds. Please send your stories here: NAASpub@gmail.com



We will do some editing, if needed, and will post a photo or two with it. There's no need to be shy.



Spotlight on Species

Ruby-crowned Kinglet – Winter Migrant

By Lisa Grubbs

This highly energetic little warrior can be quickly identified, even from a distance, by their tiny size and characteristic behavior of frantically foraging in the lower branches and shrubs flicking their wings to scare out insects. The male will flash his crown feathers and reveal the bird's namesake during display, when agitated or alarmed. The tiny songbird hangs out in mixed flocks with titmice, creepers and chickadees. These acrobats seem to be curious and friendly around humans.

Habitat: riparian thickets, shrubby woodlands, deciduous forests, parks and suburbs

Breeding: nests high in conifer trees which makes them the chagrin of researchers. Monogamous during breeding season. Female builds well-concealed nest and broods with male gathering food – one brood per year with clutch sizes that range from five to twelve eggs

Range: Winter visitor to Arizona's lowlands, breed in boreal forests of Alaska and Canada and in Rocky Mountains

Similar species: Hutton's Vireo

Status: North American population is large, safe and stable since 1966. Minor threats for the survival of these birds are wildfires and deforestation.

Cool facts: Latin name for Kinglet means "small King"; largest clutch size of any passerine in North America; lives up to five years in the wild

Good place to see: Montezuma Well Picnic area





Adventures with Trogons

By Roy May

The Elegant Trogan (*Trogon elegans*) is, well, "elegant." I wanted to see it, so two years ago I joined an Arizona Field Ornithologists expedition to southeast Arizona. We spent a couple of days (and nights) adding to eBird species such as the Arizona Woodpecker, Mexican Spotted Owl, Elf Owl, and a Common Poorwill, as well as Montezuma Quail, Lucy's Warbler, Vermillion Flycatcher, and Bewick's Wren, among others. The Border Patrol was suspicious of our night-time movements, but the officers were nice enough when they realized we really were bird watchers! The second day we turned our attention closer to Patagonia and found the trogons! What a treat. Across a shallow canyon, a magnificent male perched on an open branch (as is its habit to do so). We found a female nearby. A little later we observed another pair. I lived in Costa Rica for many years, so I had seen the Elegant Trogan numerous times, but observing the trogon in Arizona was a lifer for my USA list.

Birdwatching in Costa Rica, with 10 species of Trogonidae –including the Resplendent Quetzal (*Pharomachrus mocinno*) – was a treat. These birds are, as Alexander Skutch said, "among the most beautiful of feathered creatures" and I always delighted to see them. Indeed, my wife Janet believed any birdwatching foray successful if she saw a trogon, even if she didn't see another bird! "Dignified," as Skutch describes them, they are forest birds, but, luckily for birdwatchers, tend to be sedentary and perch on open branches at forest edges, making them easy to observe.

I remember the first time I saw a trogon. I was on my way to give a talk at the Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve in the mountains of northern Costa Rica. On a lonely turn in the road, a Black-headed Trogan (*Trogon melanocephalus*) flew before me and perched on the other side of the road. I stopped and watched it for a long while before I had to move on. I thought I was in paradise! I first observed the Elegant Trogan in the Palo Verde National Park in northwest Costa Rica. I hiked up a Cretaceous era ridge overlooking an extensive wetland. On an overhanging branch I saw the trogon. Back then ornithologists distinguished two species, the so-called Coppery-tailed (*Trogonurus ambiguus*) and the Elegant (*T. elegans*). I decided I was seeing the Coppery-tailed, but since then they have been merged into a single species, the Elegant (*T. elegans*).

One time in Panama, I hiked what remains of the nearly 500-year-old *Camino Real* of Spanish colonial times. After several hours of walking through rain forest, I unexpectedly came to a highway. I had no idea where I was, so I continued along the roadway, hoping someone might orient me and even give me a ride. I did find a group of men, but they were



Adult male. Photo: Gary Clark/Audubon

inmates from the Panama City jail picking-up trash. They were friendly enough but couldn't help me. But about then, I looked up and lo-and-behold, a White-tailed Trogan (*Trogon viridis*) was perched on an electric cable. Suddenly I didn't care that I was lost! This trogon was a new one for me; it's not found in Costa Rica. I walked on. Shortly a taxi came by and gave me a lift. The driver finally figured out how to get me back to the Canopy Tower ecolodge where Janet and I were saying.

One of my most memorable trogon observations was in the Dominican Republic. I was in the country for a teaching and lecturing assignment. The island of Hispaniola, where the Dominican Republic and Haiti are located, has been isolated for millions of years. Like Australia, it has numerous wild creatures that are endemic, among them the Hispaniolan Trogan (*Priotelus roseigaster*). Of course, I wanted to see it. A friend dropped me off at the Sierra de Bahoruco National Park, a key location for the trogon. When I paid my entrance fee, the official pointed to a young man shouldering a World War II vintage assault rifle. He would accompany me, I was informed. A lot of tourists are hijacked, the official explained. I wasn't pleased to have a guard, but then, I didn't have a choice. An armed guard would accompany me.

We set out, me wondering which trail might be the best for the trogon since I had several options according to the guide map. My guard was friendly enough and after a few minutes, I realized that he was more than an armed guard: he was a bird guide. I wasn't the first birdwatcher he'd accompanied! He asked if I wanted to see the "papagayo" –the Dominican word for trogon but which in the rest of Latin America means "macaw"–. *Claro que sí*—yes indeed—, so he led me to another trail. We came to where he was certain we would see the bird, but, of course, it was nowhere to be seen nor heard. Not a problem for my armed guard. He began to call it in. Shortly we heard a distant response, then closer, and finally after several minutes, the "papagayo" appeared. Wow. Armed guards are indeed useful! He came as part of my entrance fee, but I gave him a fine tip at the end of the day. Not only did the day add a "lifer" bird to my list, the armed guard was a "lifer" for me as a birdwatcher.

Members of the Trogonidae family, trogons are found in Africa and Southeast Asia, but are best represented in Neotropical America with 37 species (including the quetzals). The Elegant Trogan (*T. elegans*) is a permanent resident of Arizona. A cavity nester, it relies primarily on sycamore trees typical of riparian corridors. The only other trogon to occasionally visit the state from Mexico is the Eared Quetzal (*Euptilotis neoxenus*), previously known as Eared Trogan (because it doesn't belong to the genus *Pharomachrus*, the genus of true quetzals).

Fortunately, the Elegant Trogan may be increasing in Arizona, but its conservation status depends on healthy riparian corridors in its limited range. Unfortunately for the bird, this part of Arizona increasingly is experiencing mining and other habitat destructive activities. Let's not forget: it is a privilege to have the neotropical Elegant Trogan reside permanently in Arizona.



New & Renewing Members

Kip Stransky	Roy Morris	Wayne Fischer
Lynda McEvoy	Katherine Hilton	Kevin Rand
David Myers	Jane Jackson	Ann Beck
Jamie Guyn	Barbara Dickinson	Kathy & Jackie
Gregory Cunningham	Beverly Sass	Klieger/Dunham
Daniel Jessen	Brent Bitz	Sandra McCullough
Gina Zappia	David & Jeanne Sherry	Kay Hawkee
Scott & Bonnie Johnson	E. / M. Garrison/Austin	MaryheLEN Dunn
Sammi Williams	Michael Durgain	Emily Renn
Susan Bollinger	June & Bruce Johnson	Diane Hafeman
Dennis Kuhn	Pam Koch	Keith Oswald
Nanette Piper	David Hayes	Gary Verburg
Linda Sporrer	Mimi Murov	Paul Holmgren
Kathi Feher	Jed Fulkerson	

To see when your membership expires, look at the date next to your address on your newsletter.

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- Steward Bubbling Ponds: Rob Gibbs
- Steward Sedona Wetlands: Rich Armstrong
- Steward Kachina Wetlands: Christina Vojta
- Steward Picture Canyon: Roy May

Ogden Nash's Birding Poem

Bird watchers top my honours list.
I aimed to be one, but I missed.
Since I'm both myopic and astigmatic,
My aim turned out to be erratic,
And I, bespectacled and binocular,
Exposed myself to comment jocular.

We don't need too much birdlore, do we,
To tell a flamingo from a towhee:
Yet I cannot, and never will,
Unless the silly birds stand still.
And there's no enlightenment in a tour
Of ornithological literature.
Is yon strange creature a common chickadee,
Or a migrant alouette from Picardy?

You can rush to consult your Nature guide
And inspect the gallery inside,
But a bird in the open never looks
Like its picture in the birdie books-
Or if it once did, it has changed its plumage,
And plunges you back into ignorant gloomage.
That is why I sit here growing old by inches,
Watching a clock instead of finches,
But I sometimes visualize in my gin
The Audubon that I audubin.

