



July 2024 Newsletter

PASCO AUDUBON

Formerly known as West Pasco Audubon

Upcoming Events

Saturday, July 6th

Bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park. **7:30am** in the Education Center parking lot

Saturday, July 13th

Birding by Bike

Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park **8am** in the Education Center parking lot

Wishing all of our members and friends a wonderful summer. Look out for our monthly newsletters, which will be slimmer than usual, but each one will contain an article about birds by Tom Butler. Enjoy!



Upcoming July Events

It feels like summer is well and truly here! We know that many of you are traveling, but for those staying closer to home, we still have a couple of events for you.

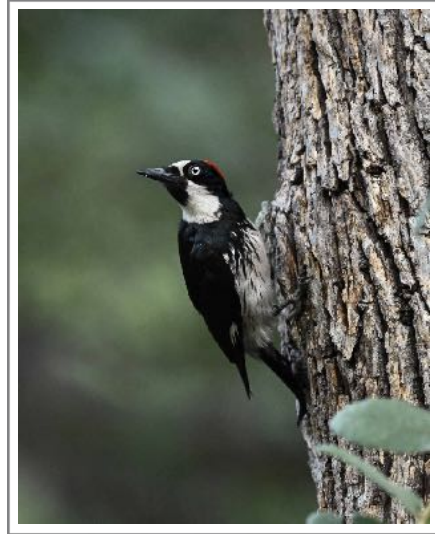
On July 6th, we'll have our monthly bird walk in Jay B. Starkey Wilderness Park with Joe Colantonio. We will leave from the Education Center parking lot at 7:30am for this walk. Please note the earlier start time as we attempt to beat as much of the heat as we can.

Saturday, July 13th will see our monthly Birding by Bike adventure - also in Starkey Park this time around. Meet Bob Burkard in the Education Center parking lot at 8am for an enjoyable trip along the multi-use trail while looking for our summer resident birds. Reach Bob at robertburkard9@gmail.com.

Our 2024-25 schedule is now available online at <https://pascoaudubon.com/schedule.html>



Elegant Trogon by Pat Goldberg



Acorn Woodpecker by Pat Goldberg

Pasco Audubon Visits Cochise County, Arizona

by Christine Rowland

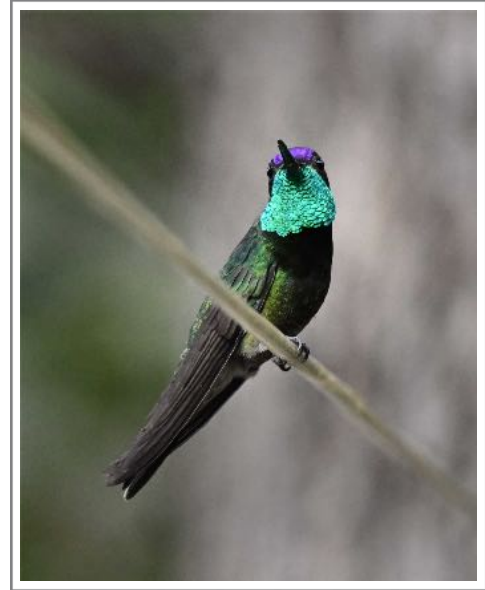
Cochise County, in southeast Arizona, is home to the 'sky islands' of the Sonoran Desert, which are home to a special array of birds and other wildlife. This area attracts quite a few neotropical birds that just reach into this southeastern most corner of the state. This is where our former chapter president, Ken Tracey, moved with his wife Linda and son Steve when he left Pasco several years ago. So 10 of us from Pasco Audubon visited to experience the area for ourselves, with Ken and Steve to help us make the most of our time there.

On Monday, June 10th four of us (Don, Pamela, Anthony and Christine) arrived in Tucson from Tampa via plane and drove to Hereford. On our way we made a brief stop at a stormwater treatment plant in Benson, where we found Mexican Duck, Cassin's Kingbird, Vermilion Flycatchers, Swainson's Hawk and Lucy's Warbler among others. After this encouraging start we met up with the rest of the group (Pat and Jeff, Joe and MaryEllen, Joanne and Rick) at Ken, Linda and Steve's home for a delicious lunch early in the afternoon. Their feeder stations and shrubs gave us our first looks at the iconic Acorn and Gila Woodpeckers, Anna's Hummingbirds, Mexican Jays, Bridled Titmouse and others. Steve gave us a tour of their property, and Ken and Steve discussed our week's plans with us, helping to create a practical schedule for finding as many species as possible, while visiting some of the key local hotspots and planning a full day trip to the Chiricahua Mountains in order to see some of the species that can only be found at the highest altitudes.

On our first full day, Ken showed us some of his favorite spots near and within the Coronado National Memorial site, followed by several other key spots including the Mammoth Kill site and Cochise College. Species experienced included Montezuma Quail, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Black-throated Sparrow, Cassin's Kingbird, Verdin, Dusky-capped Flycatcher and many more.



Berylline Hummingbird by Pat Goldberg



Rivoli's Hummingbird by Pat Goldberg

After a break for lunch and siesta, we visited Ash Canyon Bird Sanctuary in the late afternoon. With many hummingbird feeder stations and fruit offerings for orioles and tanagers, we had great photo opportunities for many species. We were specially fortunate enough to see our target bird for the evening, the Lucifer Hummingbird, and Rick and Joe helped us to see an elusive Lesser Nighthawk. Some of our group also saw Varied Bunting!

On day the morning of day 2 we joined Steve Tracey, a regular docent on the San Pedro House and Trails weekly walk. We walked about 3 miles through several habitats along the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Highlights here included the Black Phoebe, Abert's Towhee, Gray Hawk, Vermilian Flycatcher and for those of us who really couldn't drag ourselves away at the end, the Gilded Flicker!

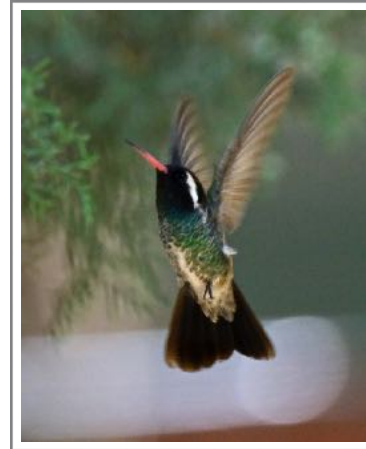
After a lunch and siesta break, several of us visited the Berylline Hummingbird that has taken up residence near the entrance to the Ramsey Canyon Preserve welcome center. With a little patience, we were all able to see it and get photographs. We ended the day with Ken, Steve and Linda joining us to experience nocturnal birds (Elf Owl, Whiskered Screech Owl, & Mexican Whip-poor-will and Common Poorwill).

On our third day we visited Ramsey Canyon Preserve for one of our key target species - the Elegant Trogon. Steve walked with us to help ensure we saw as much as possible, including the Buff-bellied Flycatcher - on a nest, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, nesting Painted Redstarts and even a Western Tanager nest! The Elegant Trogon, heard giving its signature barking call up the canyon from the outset, gave us a couple of tease looks early, and we finally got good views from the furthest point on the trail. It did not disappoint!

Friday was our adventure to the Chiricahua Mountain range with a 5am start from the Tracey home. Steve's local knowledge proved invaluable here. After a lengthy drive east, we started at the Chiricahua Monument for a restroom break that turned up an unexpected bonus - a pair of Montezuma Quail! Pinery Canyon was next on our list, and although we dipped on the Spotted Owl, we were fortunate enough to find, with plenty of Steve's help, the Red-faced Warbler, Grace's



Red-faced Warbler by Pat Goldberg



White-eared Hummingbird by Pat Goldberg

Warbler, the Western Flycatcher, and Mexican Chickadee amongst others. Higher and higher we drove to our next stop, Barfoot Junction, where we got our first glimpse of the Steller's Jay, a very cooperative Pygmy Nuthatch, Western Bluebirds and the sole Greater Pewee of our trip. Then on to Rustler Park where we heard the Olive Warbler and an unexpected bonus was a flyover flock of a half dozen Red Crossbills as we walked back down to our vehicles.

From Rustler Park we began our descent and made a stop at George Walker House - another famous feeder yard where Steve's eagle eyes rewarded us all with views of the rare White-eared Hummingbird, a brief glimpse at a female Lucifer Hummingbird, and we saw the Juniper Titmouse - a species only found in this local area. We visited a feeder stop in Portal which yielded a Blue-throated Mountain Gem (hummingbird), a Curve-billed Thrasher nesting in a cactus, and a Greater Roadrunner. Our final stop for the trip was the famous Bob Rodriguez (formerly Dave Jasper's) yard. Wow - this was definitely a great final list for the trip with Crissal Thrasher, Cactus Wren, and good looks at a Varied Bunting.

On our last full day of birding, 6 of us remained, and used the opportunity to ensure that all had seen the Botteri's Sparrow (where Ken had shown us it would be but had not turned up earlier in the week), another momentary glimpse at a pair of Montezuma Quail near the Coronado Memorial visitor's center, and the Rufous-crowned Sparrow at the top of the mountain. And spectacular views from the top! Finally, a celebratory lunch with Ken, Linda, Steve and the 6 of us to thank our hosts for making it a fantastic birding trip. Across our trip we saw about 132 species of birds, and for me a total of 80 'lifers'! Who said there's nothing to see in June?



From left to right: Rick and Joanne Chamberlain, Anthony Marella, Christine Rowland, Don Fraser, Pamela Graber, Steve Tracey, Pat and Jeff Goldberg, Joe Colontonio and Ken Tracey. Photo by Linda Tracey.



Arizona Sister by Don Fraser



Western Pygmy Blue by Don Fraser

Cochise County: Butterflies and Other Wildlife

by Don Fraser

June is considered the worst month in which to see butterflies in Arizona. But that certainly didn't deter me from looking. I searched high and low everywhere we went but due to the extreme heat and lack of rain I found relatively few. Butterflies need flowering plants for food (nectar) and plants need water. Therefore, most of the butterflies I encountered were at high elevations (5000' to 8500' above sea level) where some small pools and wet meadows containing residual snow melt still persisted. After the rest of the group headed back to Florida I spent two extra days on Mt. Lemmon (part of Coronado National Forest situated just north of Tucson) specifically looking for butterflies and was rewarded with a few high elevation specialties.

In total I identified and photographed 37 butterfly species on our trip, of which 17 were lifers. While this represents less than 10% of all the butterflies recorded from the state, a lot of time and effort was expended in finding them - making it all the more rewarding. Below is the list of butterflies observed, accompanied by photographs of some of the more cooperative ones.

See a full list of butterflies seen and additional photographs on the next page.



Desert Cloudywing by Don Fraser



Northern Cloudywing by Don Fraser



Coati by Don Fraser



Javelina by Don Fraser

Don's Cochise County Butterflies:

1. Pipevine Swallowtail
2. Two-tailed Swallowtail (Arizona's state butterfly)
3. Checkered White
4. Small White (European Cabbage White)
5. Orange Sulphur
6. Cloudless Sulphur
7. Mexican Yellow
8. Sleepy Orange
9. Dainty Sulphur
10. Thicket Hairstreak
11. Gray Hairstreak
12. Western Pygmy-blue (the smallest North American butterfly)
13. Marine Blue
14. Reakirt's Blue
15. Echo Azure
16. Mormon Metalmark
17. Palmer's Metalmark
18. Arizona Checkerspot
19. Satyr Comma
20. Mourning Cloak
21. Arizona Red-spotted Purple
22. Arizona Sister
23. Nabokov's Satyr
24. Canyonland Satyr
25. Red Satyr
26. Queen
27. Silver-spotted Skipper
28. Desert Cloudywing
29. Northern Cloudywing
30. Pacuvius Cloudywing
31. Common Checkered-Skipper
32. Orange Skipperling
33. Taxiles Skipper
34. Deva Skipper
35. Python SkipperType to enter text

Mammal List

1. White-tailed Deer
2. Pronghorn
3. White-nosed Coati
4. American Black Bear
5. Desert Cottontail
6. Black-tailed Jackrabbit
7. Cliff Chipmunk
8. Arizona Gray Squirrel
9. Collared Peccary (Javelina)
10. Coyote



Cliff Chipmunk by Christine Rowland



Black-tailed Jackrabbit by Christine Rowland



Are You Smarter than a Crow?

by Tom Butler

Tom Butler writes a column regularly for his community newsletter and has generously allowed us to reproduce his articles. Tom has installed bird feeders and viewing stations throughout his community (Traveler's Rest) and leads Tuesday bird walks for residents. Look for another of Tom's articles about birds next month.

Human nature and a little mix of pride would have us responding with an emphatic – YES! Of course, I'm smarter than a bird. I solved today's Wordle in four tries. No bird can do that! And yet there are scientists conducting studies on the learning capacity of birds that have compared the intelligence of a crow to that of a seven-year-old human. We begin feeling confident in our abilities upon learning that our competition is a child. That is, of course, until one of your grandkids needs to explain the steps in maneuvering through an app on your smart phone. Oops! Maybe we should explore the capabilities of animals in general and birds specifically before we make any assumptions.

Crows, Ravens and Jays make up the family of birds called Corvidae, or Corvids for short. This group has long been considered the most intelligent, not only in the feathered community, but quite possibly in the entire animal kingdom. Wow! That is a bold statement when you consider that porpoises, primates, parrots and other amazing animals are competing for title of "Smartest". Learned Behavior is a term which describes the demonstration of an action resulting from observation and every-day experiences. These behaviors give us the early signs as to just how smart these Corvids and other animals really are. Will your dog "sit" for a treat? Of course! Will a porpoise do a front-flip for a handful of sardines? Yes, indeed! I even know a dog named Charlie that uses his nose to push a small end table as a signal that he needs to go out. Seriously! Crows and Ravens have also been performing learned behaviors in testing programs for decades and have solidified their place near the top of the "Animal I.Q." chart.

We know that animals of many descriptions are smart enough to perform learned behaviors. They perform these behaviors for us daily. Therefore, in order to distinguish which members of the animal kingdom will move up the smart chart, we must raise the performance bar to another level. Let's talk about "Problem Solving". Abstract reasoning and group decision making will set some animals apart from others. We have many examples of species uniting to achieve their goal.



A small group of birders witnessed an example of this recently. After hearing the call of a Barred Owl, we searched the canopy for this well-camouflaged bird with no luck. That is until a group of crows banded together in order to drive away the predator. Their effort was unsuccessful, but it gave away the location of the owl and demonstrated the group decision making used in higher levels of thinking. Many animals make use of group unity to hunt prey. Wolves, hyenas, orcas and the White Pelicans that visit us from time to time, all demonstrate this group thinking process. I have watched a hundred White Pelicans herd fish to the far end of a Lake. Then, when the fish run out of space to swim, they turn back and attempt to escape hungry mouths that open like a net. This moment is documented when diving birds begin scooping up fish. Group success! But we still need to raise the bar further in the process of evaluation.

The ability to create and use tools is the defining ability that few members of the animal kingdom can boast of. Corvids are the only non-primate that have demonstrated this critical thinking milestone. Crows and Ravens have been extensively tested for decades. Aesop's Fables provides one story of a crow dropping pebbles into a pitcher of water until the level was high enough to drink. This is not just a myth! Studies, as recent as 2009, have documented this behavior and confirmed that a higher level of analytic thought exists in the family of birds known as Corvidae. Crows in other countries have been seen dropping walnuts near traffic lights to use vehicle wheels for cracking open a favorite delicacy. Crows and other Corvids use sticks as spears or hooks to retrieve food from crevasses. They have been witnessed bending wire to create additional tools, matching the creative ability of many primates. Some zoologists refer to the crow as an ape with feathers. Their ability to overcome issues amidst daily life has put them solidly near the top when it comes to I.Q. Maybe we should stop debating the intelligence comparison when it comes to crows. We have that Wordle solving success going for us and we may not want to press the issue. Let's walk away with our pride intact and give the crows some well-earned respect for their ingenious and amazing abilities.



Volunteers Needed

Do you have a little time on your hands on the first Saturday of the month from October through April to help out at our meetings during the season? In April Laurie Kell stepped down from running the refreshments after many years of providing this service for our members. Would anyone be willing to step into her shoes? It means arriving at meetings early - about 45 minutes before they start - to set up coffee and other light refreshments for our birders and guests. JoAnn Sinatra has kindly agreed to help out, but would like someone else to take the lead. It doesn't have to be one person, if you have a friend or two who would share this task with you, that would be wonderful too. Please let me know at president@pascoaudubon.com.

Pasco Audubon Board of Directors

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