



## The Cactus Wrendition

### November - December 2000

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This page contains several articles from the July August 2000 Cactus Wrendition, the newsletter of the Maricopa Audubon Society. Not all articles are reproduced on this page. Fieldtrip information, recent rare-bird sightings, meeting programs/schedules, and general chapter information are presented elsewhere in this site.

To navigate to other parts of the site, scroll to the bottom of the page or use [this link](#).

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### Newsletter Contents

- [Notes and Announcements](#)
  - [From The Editor](#)
  - [Anne Peyton's Work Selected](#)
  - [Conservation – "Fireproofing" Our Forests](#)
  - [Carlota Mine](#)
  - [Orange Bishops Breeding in Phoenix](#)
  - [Field Trip Report – Birding and Bonding in Southeast Arizona](#)
  - [Field Trip to San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico](#)
  -
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### Notes and Announcements

The **Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival** will be held November 8-12, 2000 in Harlingen, Texas. Speakers include Kevin Karlson and David Sibley. Call 800/531-7346 or e-mail [tbortness@harlingen.com](mailto:tbortness@harlingen.com) for registration brochure, or visit the web at [www.harlingen.com](http://www.harlingen.com).

The **Festival of the Cranes** will be held November 16-19 at Bosque del Apache NWR, Socorro, NM. Mass flights of Cranes and Geese. For information check their web site— [www.friendsofthebosque.org](http://www.friendsofthebosque.org) or call 505/835-0424.

The fourth annual **Central Valley Birding Symposium** will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Stockton, CA, November 16-19. Field trips, a Birder's Market and art display, workshops, and speakers, including Kenn Kaufman, Kimball Garrett, Kevin Karlson, and Debi Shearwater. For more information, contact Frances Olivier, 1817 Songbird Place, Lodi, CA 95240; 209/369-2010; [ffoliver@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ffoliver@ucdavis.edu).

**Book signing:** Kenn Kaufman will be signing his new field guide—*Birds of North America* at 1:00 p.m., Saturday, November 25 at the Wild Bird Center, 10701 N Scottsdale Rd (northeast corner of Scottsdale & Shea), Scottsdale.

Planning Ahead:

**San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico**—January 5-12, 2001. See below for more information.

Morro Coast Audubon Society in San Luis Obispo County, CA will be holding their 5<sup>th</sup> co-sponsored **Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival** January 12-15, 2001. Last year's festival counted 201 species, including both land and water birds. Kenn Kaufman will be the main speaker. There will be over 40 different Field trips and Workshops. Morro Bay is located on the coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco. For more information check out their web site at [www.morro-bay.net/birds](http://www.morro-bay.net/birds) or call Morro Bay C of C 800/231-0592.

# The ABA Annual Convention will be held in Beaumont, Texas on April 18-24, 2001. You can join birders from all over the country for spring migration on the Upper coast of Texas plus workshops, programs, and a chance to network with other birders. For costs and information call 800/850-2473.

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

## From the Editor

Deva Burns

Do you drink coffee? I do. Do you buy shade-grown coffee? I don't. Jeanine's article has really made me think. I am guilty as charged and from her article, it looks like a lot of us are. It is not always easy to do the right thing. Especially if, like me, shopping for groceries is something you want to get over as soon as possible. If it is not convenient, I find myself not doing it. I would like to add my voice to her plea. I know you care about birds—you are receiving this newsletter. My challenge to you is to do something about it. Try to consume shade-grown coffee. Try to let your employer and favorite restaurant know how you feel. It may not change things, but you'll feel better. Every little step counts and "each journey starts with just one step".

This issue contains so much diversity and so much information. I hope you enjoy reading it as much as I have. I was correct last issue when I opined that everyone has a potential article to share. Keep them coming—rest-assured that if they are not in the first issue after they are sent, they are not discarded but thankfully kept for a future one. Lisa Force's article on Proposition 102 is not only informative but a reminder. Please go to the polls November 7 (or like Jim and I—early balloting is a godsend for busy people.) Laurie Nessel also reminds us to get involved. It only takes a few minutes to contact YOUR local, state, or federal representatives and let them know how you want them to vote (and remind them how they got there). . A future Wren\*dition will list names and addresses for your convenience. For statewide conservation information join the AZ.ACTIVIST listserv on the Web: send an e-mail message to [LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG](mailto:LISTSERV@LIST.AUDUBON.ORG) with **no** subject heading. The text of your message should read: SUBSCRIBE AZ-ACTIVIST

Walter Thurber does a wonderful job each issue not only in getting Field Trip information out to us but also lining up those field trips and leaders. This issue he has also provided us with the Christmas Bird Count information. If you have never participated on a Count, I encourage you to pick one and do it.

This December 31 is the "real" end of the millennium—hope the hoopla does not return! Although I have not been the editor for the entire year, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have contributed to the Wren\*dition. The following is a partial list (alphabetically): Jeanine Baker, Bob Bradley, Scott Burge, Jim Burns, Ritch Ditch, Cliff Drowley, Herb Fibel, Tom Hildebrandt, Susan Kantro, Ann McDermott, Laurie Nessel, Walter Thurber, Dick Todd, Barb Winterfield, Bob and Janet Witzeman. Best wishes to all of you for the holiday season and the coming year.

Corrections from the last issue: A conversion from Mac to PC changed San Blas to San Bias and a typo renamed Tom Gatz to Tom Gaty. My apologies for not catching them.

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

**MAS Member Anne Peyton's Work Selected for "Birds in Art" Show**

**Craig Fisher**

A Sandhill Crane awakens to the new morning, twisting its neck and preening its feathers. This scene, captured by Phoenix artist Anne Peyton in the painting "Early Morning Preen", was selected for exhibition into the prestigious "Birds in Art" show at the Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum in Wausau, Wis.

For Peyton, the selection into the international exhibition marks a high point in her art career. A noted and well-collected motorsports artist, she found new enthusiasm by depicting natural subjects in early 2000. "In a way, this selection into "Birds in Art" has drawn my art career to a full circle," Peyton said. "I first started painting birds as a child in Fort Collins, Colo. My grandfather had feeders in his backyard that drew cardinals and magpies and I could spend hours drawing birds.

"The best thing about nature art is that the subject is constantly changing. No matter where you look nature is present, even in the city. I have always loved birds and have been an active birder for several years. All of my vacations involve the pursuit of species that are new to me. My interest in bird photography is helping to expand the photo reference library needed to create accurate art."

Peyton believes in getting close to birds, including hands-on work when necessary. She is an education volunteer at Liberty Wildlife, a bird rehabilitation center in Scottsdale, Ariz., which enables her to work with non-releasable birds in classrooms and other public venues, as well as leading grade-school field trips to see birds in natural environments.

The 25th "Birds in Art" show is considered the premier bird art competition in the world. This year's exhibition attracted nearly 500 pieces from six continents, of which 90 were selected for the show. The list of artists reads like a "Who's Who" of nature art, including Robert Bateman, Carl Benders, Guy Coheleach, Cindy House, Lars Jonsson, Maynard Reese, Bart Rulon and John Seerey-Lester. The show runs through November 12.

"The camaraderie among the artists was such that I didn't feel like a first-time artist at all and the artwork on exhibit was truly inspirational," Peyton added. "I couldn't wait to return to Phoenix and get back to work."

A pair of Peyton's works, "Sunday Swim" (Ring-necked Duck) and "Desert Dweller" (Burrowing Owl), have also been selected for exhibition at the 2000 Kentucky National Wildlife Art Exhibit, Oct. 13-Dec. 3, in Henderson, Ky.

Two additional pieces, "Early Evening Vigil" (Great Horned Owl) and "Living Color" (Wood Duck) are currently on exhibit at the Housman Gallery, located at the Tucson Audubon Store, 300 E. University Blvd. in Tucson.

---

[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

## **"Fireproofing" Our Forests**

**by Bob Witzeman**

Every creature is better alive than dead – men, moose and pine trees – and he who understands it aright will rather preserve its life than destroy it.

Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862)

The sensationalized year-2000 forest fires have become the foot in the door for the lumber industry and its supporters in Congress. Congress and the Administration appear to be dangerously close to jumping on the bandwagon of Professor Wallace Covington of the NAU School of Forestry and a so-called "pre-settlement restoration" forest fireproofing proposal. Some 40 million acres of a \$10 billion restoration treatment over the next 15 years is being proposed. It could have a \$10 billion pricetag. Already some pro-logging supporters in Congress are proposing to "expedite" the National Environmental Policy Act review process for "restoration" down to 90 days. This appears reminiscent of the notorious 1995 "timber salvage" rider when Congress gave loggers blanket exemption from U.S. environmental law.

In “pre-settlement restoration” logging companies are asked to thin the forest and remove the “doghair” thickets (the “laddering” fuel of crown fires that are the product of a century of livestock grazing and fire suppression). In return, Congress would allow the logging industry to log off a yet unspecified amount of the remaining big trees and old-growth.

Analysis of the various northern Arizona “pre-settlement restorations” by environmental groups has shown why these fireproofings are both environmentally and esthetically objectionable. To date, 73-88% of the forest’s five to 15-inch diameter trees were cut, as well as 100% of all trees up to four inches (the latter most conservationists do not find objectionable though a “forest” without a single small tree is truly odd). Since the Flagstaff area “restoration” sites have been logged a number of times in the past century, few remnants of old-growth remain there. So if “restoration” removes almost all of the trees up to 16 inches; and all of the large trees have already been logged, “pre-settlement restoration” essentially removes the “forest.” Visually, these test plots near Flagstaff are desolate, odd looking, and just plain ugly. These “thinned” areas may now be parks, but they are no longer forests.

The irony of the “pre-settlement restorations” is that they don’t actually fireproof the forest. They leave huge amounts of fire-prone slash. Controlled burns on one northern Arizona test plot ended up as charred skeletons.

Covington’s Mount Trumbull prescription exemplifies why pro-logging Congressmen love “pre-settlement restoration.” It took this writer and Maricopa Audubon’s President, Scott Burge and our families four days in all to drive to the remote Mt. Trumbull site, photograph the logging operation underway, and return to Phoenix. My wife photographed logging trucks hauling off huge ponderosa matriarchs. On that site we found and photographed the 18 to 30 inch old-growth stumps to match what was on the trucks.

One problem with “pre-settlement restoration” is there is no one formula. In areas isolated from public scrutiny, like remote Mt. Trumbull, it becomes covert old-growth logging under the pretense of fireproofing. If a tree falls in the forest, and no conservationist is there, would they be able to hear (or report) it?

Another problem with “pre-settlement restoration” is that it may perpetuate the “doghair” thickets created by cattle grazing. These crown fire “laddering” fuels are the very problem “restoration” was designed to eliminate. BLM has announced that they will continue to graze cattle some 80% of the time after “restoration.” While they hope periodic “controlled” burns will solve their problem, the devil is in the details. Doghair, crown fire, soil erosion, siltation, water quality degradation, and exotic grasses and weeds will be just a few of their “cow” devils.

A better fireproofing proposal would be to: (1) limit thinning to forests near human habitation, (2) disallow old-growth logging during thinning, (3) remove slash from all forest service operations, (4) permanently remove all cows from our national forests, (5) periodic controlled burns, and (6) require property owners to clean up around their perimeters. Recent studies showed many of the houses at Los Alamos burned, not from crown fires, but from understory ground fire! Roofs and yards were covered with ponderosa pine needles. Those who had done as little as sweeping the needles away from immediately next to their homes fared better!

BLM old-growth stealth logging under the guise of “pre-settlement restoration.” This remote Mt. Trumbull logging site on the Arizona strip is far more inaccessible to Phoenix conservationists than the lengthy 1953 trip Governor Pyle’s Phoenix law officers had to make to interdict Short Creek polygamists. The yardstick held by Russell Burge reveals 18-30 inch forest matriarchs awaiting the sawmill (photo Janet Witzeman).

Russell Burge measures a tree stump nearly the length of his yardstick at the NAU “pre-settlement restoration” site at Mount Trumbull. Pro-logging western senators hope to sneak through this old-growth logging scheme under the guise of “fire control” (photo Janet Witzeman).

Removing 88% of trees results in an unnaturally sparse, odd looking “forest.” Fort Valley Project, Coconino NF, near Flagstaff (photo Martos Hoffman).

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

Final Permit Issued to Carlota Copper Project

**Laurie Nessel**

A protracted attempt to thwart a massive open pit mine in pristine desert near Globe, Az, was dealt a blow when the EPA issued the Carlota

Copper Project its final permit on July 24, 2000. This permit has been appealed jointly by the Maricopa Audubon Society, Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, National And Arizona Wildlife Federations, Mineral Policy Center, Friends of Pinto Creek and "Citizens." Sometimes the logic of the project defies common sense. It is true, as Carlota claims, that the mine will improve the water quality in Pinto Creek by reducing copper content. But the enormous price to be paid includes permanently diverting Pinto Creek for one mile into a soil-cement channel, digging a 600-foot deep, 300 acre pit in the creek, transplanting endangered Arizona hedgehog cactus, and drawing 500-890 gallons of water per minute from the Pinto Creek-Haunted Canyon wellfield aquifer. The mitigation plan requires the water to be replenished, which Carlota plans to do with water from the same aquifer it draws it from, or from an as yet unsecured outside source. There is no guarantee that a 313-acre heap leach pad contained by one seven and two ten-story high earthen dams, treated with 400 tons of sulfuric acid per day for nearly 20 years, will not leak or spill. The project engineers also designed the structures that failed in Guyana in 1995, creating a massive cyanide spill. When mining, reclamation and inspections are complete, Carlota will have its bonds returned, leaving the toxic containment ponds and hundreds of acres of moonscape to the U.S. taxpayer. The mineral rights were purchased from the federal government for \$5 an acre decades ago. Cambior, a Canadian corporation, reportedly purchased the mineral rights for \$10 million dollars in the early '90's. We have the 1872 Mining Law to thank for this gross inequity to the U.S. taxpayer.

All of this, according to the EPA, is in compliance with the Clean Water Act. Haunted Canyon and Pinto Creek are rare, perennial desert streams of which only 3% remain in Arizona. The waters of Haunted Canyon support a 95% canopy of Arizona alder, Velvet ash, Arizona sycamore, Arizona black walnut, One-seed juniper and Arizona cypress. A bumper crop of berries produced by the one-seed junipers attracted a plethora of birds in January, 1996 including, many Townsend's Solitaires, Hermit Thrushes, Western Bluebirds, hundreds of robins and an exceptional appearance of the Eared Trogon. Another bumper crop, or masting, is predicted for this winter.

There is a 33-day appeals process and other avenues are still open to protect this special place. Lower Haunted Canyon and Lower Pinto Creek have been nominated for protection under the Unique Waters designation of the Arizona Department of Water Quality. This would not stop the mine, but would require that water quality is maintained.

We can petition the federal government to buy back the mine. This would stop the in-perpetuity waste rock dumps, pits and toxic leach pad that will be the legacy of Carlota. Once mining begins, access to Haunted Canyon will be severely limited. You can write Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior, 1849 C. St., NW, Wash., D.C. 20240 or Email: [Bruce\\_Babbitt@ios.doi.gov](mailto:Bruce_Babbitt@ios.doi.gov) . and ask him to please buy back the mineral rights of the Carlota Copper Mine near Miami, Arizona, and stop forever this planned massive, additional mining degradation of the already mine-polluted Pinto Creek watershed. Do not let the short-term 20-year gains of a few outweigh the long-term benefit to all: a cleaner watershed for future generations. Send a copy to Forest Chief Mike Dombeck, 201 14th St., SW, Wash., D.C. 20250 or Email: [mdombeck@fs.fed.us](mailto:mdombeck@fs.fed.us) For more information, visit the website <http://aspin.asu.edu/pintocreek>. Contributions can be sent to Citizens for the Preservation of Powers Gulch and Pinto Creek, 53280 Oak Ln., Miami. AZ 85539

---

[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

## **Orange Bishops Breeding In Phoenix**

**Tom Gatz**

The Orange Bishop (*Euplectes franciscanus*), a member of the mainly African weaver family Ploceidae, and first observed in Phoenix in 1998, may be here to stay and appears to be spreading. As reported in the November-December 1999 issue of "The Cactus Wrenition," this species, originating in sub-Sahara Africa, was first observed in Phoenix in September 1998, when a small colony of ten or more individuals was found in a moist, grassy, tree-lined wash, just south of Greenway Parkway and east of Third Avenue (across from 1st Drive). Among the brightly-colored males displaying and chasing females, was a female-plumaged bird feeding a similarly-plumaged individual, likely an adult feeding a fledged young. The colony was active again from at least July through September of 1999. In mid-August of that same year, a visiting birder from New York reported a male Orange Bishop at the Princess resort in Scottsdale.

Starting in June of 2000, I again observed courtship activity in the Greenway/1st Drive location, as well as at a second location, about 0.7 miles to the east along the same wash, in a small cattail marsh just southwest of the intersection of 7th Street and Greenway Parkway. At this new location, I observed a male with 4 females and an immature male (similar to the female but with orange on the throat) in June. On a later visit in July, the male was carrying nesting material (a long blade of grass) into the stand of cattails and pursuing a female. On August 6, wearing my waders, I found and photographed a recently constructed, but unoccupied, nest, apparently of this species, in the cattail marsh, attached to tall Johnson Grass (*Sorghum halepense*) stems. The nest was 4 inches tall by 3 inches wide, with a side opening near the top.

The males have a clicking, mechanical, monotone "song" described in the Geographic as "tsik tsik tsik." At both Greenway locations, the bishops were observed feeding on the seedheads of Johnson Grass, a non-native grass from the Mediterranean region, now widely distributed in wet areas of Arizona.

An INTERNET search revealed more information about this species both as a cage bird (the obvious source of the wild birds observed in California, Florida and now Arizona), as well as their current wild status in Southern California. The Rare Bird update for the Northwest Florida/South Alabama area for July 12, 1998, reported a female "Red"(likely Orange) Bishop visiting a feeder in Gulf Breeze and mentioned that small colonies of this species are now established in the West Indies, believed to have originated from escaped cage birds.

According to bird breeder Stuart Balfour, a male can keep a harem of up to 50 females! Others report harem size only up to 6 females (Craig, A.J.F.K. 1980. J. Ornithol. 121:144-160.) The Male escorts females around to a selection of the nests he has built during the season. If she accepts one, mating occurs, the female lines the nest, settles there, and the male moves on. Apparently he does not help in breeding or rearing of the young. Balfour claims that this species cannot be kept successfully in a cage and that it requires a room-sized enclosure (escapees from which our wild birds perhaps originated?). He states that male Orange Weavers do not get their color until the end of two full years, but often start weaving nests (practicing?) before they attain full adult plumage.

Kimball Garrett published three articles (Studies in Avian Biology No. 15:221-231,1994; Western Birds 29:231-232,1998; Proc.18th Vertebr. Pest Conf. UC Davis, 1998) that discuss this species' status and identification in southern California. He states that individuals and small groups of this species were first noted in urban and suburban habitat of coastal southern California in the late 1970's. In 1997, its population in California was conservatively estimated at 400. Now flocks of 50 to 100 bishops are routinely noted in some flood-control basins near Los Angeles! Its breeding from June to November in California is believed to be tied to the seeding of grasses, mainly Echinochloa grass, in which it also builds its nest. The ball-shaped nests, placed about 3 feet above the ground, are woven from grass blades and stems, and most are found in September and October in California. Based on related species, the 2 to 3 eggs hatch in about 13 days and fledge in about 14 days. Here in Arizona, courtship and breeding activity has been observed from June through at least September. Note that not all Orange Bishops are orange; the females, immatures and non-breeding males resemble Grasshopper Sparrows. See pages 456-457 in the third edition of the National Geographic for a picture and description of this species and page 409 for pictures comparing it to the Grasshopper Sparrow.

To observe the bishops between June and September in the two areas described above, it is best to either: park at Wendy's at the northwest corner of 7th Street and Greenway Parkway, walk south on 7th Street across Greenway, go over the wash, turn right (west) and walk down to the bike path to the cattail stand, or Turn south off of Greenway Parkway at 3rd Avenue into Las Meridas complex. Go left on Sommerset and right on 3rd Avenue. Park at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Le Marche Ave. Take the sidewalk to the east over the small bridge to the powerline. Follow the powerline east about 100 yards to a grass-filled wash area on your right.

It remains to be seen if this species will be as successful in Arizona as it is in California, if it will move out of town into our riparian areas, and if it will compete with any native species. Please give me a call at 602/640-2720 if you observe any Orange Bishops in other parts of town. Monitoring the spread of this non-native species will be important in identifying and, if necessary, managing any potential threats it may pose to our native birds.

---

[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

## **Birding and Bonding in Southeast Arizona**

Herb Fibel

My daughter, Lori, has never had any interest in birds or birding. Her husband, Phil, however, showed up unexpectedly at the first session of one of my Basic Birding Classes several years ago, and since has gone on maybe half a dozen birding expeditions with me. His interest, as is often the case with new birders, is in building his life list. I'm flattered by the fact that he thinks that I'm the world's greatest birder.

This past January Lori, having fledged our only grandson, told me she was now ready to learn all about birds, and asked for a personalized mini-Basic Birding Class. Whatever the reasons for her interest, I'm certainly not one to look a gift birder in the mouth, particularly a family member.

The upshot of all of the foregoing was an extensively planned trip to southeastern Arizona in mid-June for the four of us. No serious birder would ever set up such a trip without a target list of species, and without making sure that the birds would be there on the dates of our planned trip, and I was no exception. I hoped we would see the Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher, Chihuahuan Raven, Painted Redstart, Mexican Jay, Gray Hawk, Cassin's, Tropical and Thick-billed Kingbirds, Rose-throated Becard (the only potential lifer for me), and Magnificent, Blue-throated, Broad-billed and Violet-crowned Hummingbirds.

We set out in mid-afternoon Thursday for Sierra Vista, and arrived in time to check into our motel, determine that the birds engaged in aerial combat over the motel pool were Cliff Swallows, eat a quick dinner, and take a quick run down to the San Pedro east of town on the off-chance that we would catch the Gray Hawks coming in to roost for the night. But we had no such luck. We did spot Lesser Nighthawks, though, flying low over the desert washes along the road as we made our way back to our motel.

Friday morning we checked the vacant desert lot next door and had a surprise find, a Bendire's Thrasher. Then it was off to the newly remodeled and reopened Mile-Hi Ranch at Ramsey Canyon. By the way, because parking has been expanded to twenty-two spaces, advanced reservations are no longer necessary. This is in addition to the parking spaces at the bed and breakfast, which is now the only overnight accommodations at the preserve.

Conditions were very dry and the fire danger was high. Although we hiked way up the trail, we saw no sign of either the hoped for Elegant Trogon or Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher. Even the fairly common Painted Redstart turned out to be a no show. The walk was not without interest, though. A number of deer were sighted. Black-headed Grosbeaks were everywhere, and we added a Band-tailed Pigeon and a Blue-headed Vireo to our trip list. Back at the main building while Joyce and I were in the gift shop, and Lori and Phil were outside watching the Blue-throated, Magnificent, Broad-billed and Black-chinned Hummingbirds coming to the hummingbird feeders. A birder sitting with them identified a pair of Hepatic Tanagers for them. Meanwhile sanctuary staff people had a scope focused on a Berylline Hummingbird's nest, and we saw the female sitting on the nest. They then turned the scope around and afforded us a view of a female Golden Eagle feeding its young way up on the cliffs.

Down by the bed and breakfast the Mexican Jays were making pests of themselves at the seed feeders. It wasn't until much later that I realized that the little bird I saw harassing one of the Mexican Jays was a Painted Redstart, so Phil and Lori didn't get to add this species to their life lists.

A trip up to the Beatty's B&B at Miller Canyon yielded no new species, but we did get to meet and speak with one of Tom Beatty's sons, a charming gentleman.

Our next stop after lunch was the San Pedro House, where we added only one species, the Barn Swallow. We discovered that the only source of electricity there was from solar panels, and all electricity produced went to power the resident host's motorhome, so docents working in the office and gift shop had to work without lights or cooling equipment.

Down by the San Pedro, once again, the only bird we saw was a Vermilion Flycatcher. There were no Gray Hawks in evidence, but there was a good chance to add this species Friday at the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary, so we called it a day, and headed for Sonoita and the Vineyard B&B.

This was Joyce's and my third visit, and Lori's and Phil's first, but all of us were greeted warmly by our super hosts, Ron and Sue DeCenso. This was far and away Lori's favorite part of the whole trip. Scaled Quail, another lifer for Phil and Lori, were commonplace on the property. We just had time to settle in and unpack before we drove downtown to Sonoita's other main attraction, Art and Linda Donatelli's Sonoita Cafe, where even Frasier and Niles Crane would have been pleased with the fare.

Saturday morning while the others slept, I watched a pair of Bullock's Orioles and several Cassin's Kingbirds. The orioles hung around until the others were up, but the Cassins' Kingbirds did not reappear. After a sumptuous breakfast, Ron and Sue helped us load up the car, and gave us each a hug. Lori couldn't get over the warm treatment we had received.

Then it was on to Patagonia and a stop at the bakery and coffee shop for a little local color, and a totally unnecessary post-breakfast sweet. On the way to the sanctuary we dropped in on the Paton's backyard, a must for visiting birders. In short order we spotted our target bird for the location, the Violet-crowned Hummingbird.

At the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary Joyce and Lori elected to wait at the headquarters building, while Phil and I hiked the sanctuary's trails. Here, also, we ran into, not entirely accidentally, Matt Brown, the newest Arizona Big Sitter! Matt was leading a birding tour group. After several miles of hiking, Phil had added only two new birds to his life list, a Brown-crested Flycatcher, and a Yellow-breasted Chat. When we returned to the headquarters, Joyce and Lori informed us that the sanctuary staff people had pointed out a pair of Gray Hawks, a species that Phil never did get to see on our trip.



From here we headed out to the world famous Patagonia Roadside Rest Stop. Right across the road we joined Matt's group in search of the becard. We learned that this was right around the time of its annual arrival. Matt even pointed out last year's nest, but there were no Rose-throated Becards here this day.

Kino Springs on down the road near Nogales held no surprises either except the number of new homes which had been built since the last time Joyce and I were there years ago. We then drove north to Green Valley to the Best Western. A hefty rain shower, the first rain we had seen in months, was a welcome surprise.

Madera Canyon Sunday morning was an anti-climax, but we were able to add to our trip list the expected species—Bridled Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and American Robin.

Our species tally for the trip was fifty-nine, with some disappointing major misses, but the opportunity to bond with the children was priceless.

---

[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

## A Trip To San Blas

The town of San Blas is located on the Pacific Coast approximately 900 miles south of Nogales between the Cities of Matzatlán and Puerto Vallarta. The town is situated at a point where mountains meet the Sea Of Cortez. The varied habitats include beaches, salt and fresh water marshes, dry hills and moist mountain ravines. This mosaic of habitats produces many species of wintering and tropical birds in a relatively small area. I have birded the San Blas area on seven occasions and have always managed, on every trip, to find at least three life birds. My first trip produced 45 life birds.

San Blas is an interesting Mexican Town with ruins of a Spanish fort and cathedral on a forested hill overlooking the town. A tour of these historical buildings is usually accompanied with sightings of Russet-crowned Motmots, Grayish Saltators and Yellow Grosbeaks. At night, the view of the town and the ocean from the fort is worth a trip, and the call of the Mottled Wood Owl may be heard on many evenings.

There are several pleasant birding areas within walking distance of the town. A walk down the sewage road produces Pale-Vented Euphonias, Blue-rumped Parrotlets, Yellow-winged Caciques and Rufous-backed Robins. Playing a tape in the tangles will sometimes produce the beautiful and elusive Rose-breasted Thrush-Tanager, a bird with a very discontinuous range through Mexico and Central America. At the end of the road, the sewage lagoons are good for Blackish Crane Hawks and Northern Jacana.

Another morning birding adventure is the forest (disappearing at an alarming rate) near the settlement of Singaita. The birds which can be encountered are Cinnamon Hummingbirds, Short-tailed Hawks, Squirrel Cuckoos, Rufous-Bellied Chachalaca, Happy Wrens, and White-fronted Parrots. One of the more interesting aspects of a morning walk is the number of wood warblers which winter in the San Blas area. The list includes Black-and-white Warblers, Northern Water Thrushes, Nashville Warblers and American Redstarts. I have seen Kentucky, Hooded and Yellow-throated Warblers which are outside of their typical wintering range.

A drive of less than an hour from the town takes you to the coffee plantations above the town of La Bajada. The area is a typical shade coffee plantation: coffee bushes with brilliant red berries growing under a canopy of huge trees. One visit to this type of habitat and you will see first hand the advantages of shade coffee over the monoculture of sun coffee plantations encountered in Central America. The flocks have many species of birds not encountered in the area around San Blas, and if there is a fruiting tree the activity can be awesome. A fruiting tree can be dripping with warblers, vireos, flycatchers and orioles. The birds which may be seen in the La Bajada area include Boat-billed Flycatchers, Fork-tailed and Sparkling-tailed Hummingbirds, Gray-collared Becards and Gray-crowned Woodpeckers. Sometimes in the rays of light that pierce the thick canopy, a Fan-tailed Warbler will frolic in a search for insects warmed by the sun. Unlike the San Blas area in which the temperature and humidity makes birding difficult in the afternoon, the coffee plantation can be birded all day.

Certainly the highlight of any San Blas adventure is the boat trip to La Tovar. It is the closest thing to experiencing the scenes portrayed in the movie "African Queen". A trip which starts in the late afternoon and returns at night is both thrilling, romantic and a sure way of observing the Common Potoo. The Potoo, approximately the size of a Great Horned Owl, is a nocturnal bird which roosts in the trees in search of moths. The boatmen, many who are skilled birders, will use lights to find this bird difficult to observe anywhere in its range. The boat trip starts near a salt



water estuary near the town and ends at a fresh water spring of La Tovar. The boatmen will make a special stop at the trees for roosting Boat-billed Herons. Swimming is allowed in the crystal clear water of the spring where fish, turtles and other aquatic creatures can be observed while snorkeling. For people who prefer not to swim, there is a small cantina to refresh your thirst while watching for hawks and swifts along the cliffs above the spring. The spring is fenced to separate people from crocodiles, which inhabit the river. A cruise up the winding waterway, sometimes completely covered with a thick canopy, may produce Bare-throated Tiger Herons, Anhingas, Rufous-necked Wood-Rails, Green Kingfishers, Citreoline Trogons and Mangrove Warblers.

The mountains surrounding San Blas can be explored by driving to Topic (the capital of the State of Nayarit). As the altitude increases the temperature and humidity of the coast are left behind. In the higher altitudes Gray Silky Flycatchers, Black-vented Orioles, Golden Vireos and Red-headed Tanagers may be flitting through the high canopies. After reaching the main Highway connecting Matzatlán with Topic, a short drive to the famous lookout called the La Mirador will usually provide sightings of the magnificent Military Macaws. The birds in pairs and emitting loud raucous calls can be seen far below in the steep valley.

San Blas is possibly the closest location to Arizona in which the "tropics" can be experienced. The accommodations and food of the hotels are excellent, the town historic and friendly, and birds for a first time birder or experienced tropical birder are delightful. If you would like to experience San Blas and its nature wonders, see the special field trip which will be conducted in January 2001.

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

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## **Say "NO" to Proposition 102**

**By Lisa B. Force,**

**Center for Biological Diversity and Committee for "No on 102"**

Proposition 102 is a dangerous attack on both your right to vote and on Arizona wildlife. The sole purpose of Proposition 102 is to cripple your right to pass laws that preserve and protect Arizona's wildlife.

If it passes, Proposition 102 will change the Arizona Constitution to require wildlife initiatives to pass by 67 percent of the vote. Currently, the Arizona Constitution requires that all initiatives must pass by only 51 percent of the vote. Even constitutional amendments require only a majority vote of the public. The proponents of Proposition 102 know that a 2/3 vote is almost impossible to attain, thereby effectively silencing you once and for all on wildlife issues.

- Proposition 102 is deceptively promoted as a "wildlife-conservation" measure. The truth is, Proposition 102 would make it practically impossible for voters to approve a wildlife protection initiative.
- Arizona voters restricted the use of inhumane and indiscriminate steel-jawed leghold traps on public lands by approving an initiative in 1994 with an impressive 59% majority. If Proposition 102 had been in place then, the measure would have failed and we would still have deadly traps on public lands.
- Proponents of Proposition 102 say they want to keep a small group of animal rights extremists from telling the rest of us how to manage wildlife. The fact is wildlife advocates have never abused the initiative process; only two wildlife initiatives have ever appeared on the ballot in state history. The irony is, Proposition 102 would - for the first time in the history of the state - allow a small minority of voters to block the will of the people.
- Proposition 102 changes the initiative process. Initiatives are an important safety valve in Arizona. When elected officials and political appointees fail to act in the public interest, the people can act on their own behalf through the initiative process. The simple-majority process reserves final authority for the people of Arizona.
- The Arizona legislature put Proposition 102 on the ballot, claiming concern for wildlife. But consider this: The Arizona Legislature was the very last one in the nation to outlaw dog fights, finally capitulating in 1978. Most states did so in the 1800's. Most states also outlawed cockfights in the 1800's, but the Arizona Legislature steadfastly refused until the people of Arizona overruled them. In the case of steel-jaw traps, the

Arizona Legislature wouldn't agree to even minor restrictions on the use of those cruel devices even though 65 other countries have long banned them. Again, the people of Arizona had to overrule them through the initiative process. These same politicians are now asking you to give up your right to decide these matters at the polls. Do you trust them to do the right thing for Arizona wildlife?

Proposition 102 targets wildlife initiatives for one simple reason: Its backers want to abolish your right to protect wildlife from unnecessary suffering and harm. But that's not all. Proposition 102 also jeopardizes your voting rights. It would allow decisions to be made for you by only 34% of the votes cast. Tell the legislature you won't be deceived into giving up your voting rights. Say "NO" to 102.

"No on 102" is endorsed by:

Maricopa Audubon Society

Tucson Audubon Society

Thomas Woods and Elizabeth Woodin, former Arizona Game and Fish Commissioners

Gary Walsh, President, Trout Unlimited, Zane Grey Chapter

Liberty Wildlife

Humane Society of the United States

Arizona Humane Society

The Fund for Animals

Sierra Club

Greater Phoenix Neighborhood Association

We need your help to defeat Proposition 102. To volunteer, please call or email:

Lisa Force

602-246-6498

[lforce@biologicaldiversity.org](mailto:lforce@biologicaldiversity.org)

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Next Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

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### **I Know We Are Still Drinking-up Habitat**

**Jeanine Baker**

At a perfect moment in perfect light, you sometimes feel you have made personal contact with the bird you are viewing. It was like that at Granite Reef on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The Nashville Warbler hung around foraging. He sat STILL momentarily on a low open branch. I saw a glint of light reflecting off his small bespectacled eye. He cocked his head sideways looking at me, the giant with "black tubes" for eyes. We saw many other birds that morning, many of them warblers, i.e. Black-throated Gray, Hermit, Orange-crowned, Wilson's, Yellow, MacGillivray's, Yellow-rumped, and a Painted Bunting. But the Nashville was my bird.

I've had a few science classes, but I still can't comprehend it. This warbler so small and fragile has the strength and stamina to take himself to Guatemala and back. Most of us would not have a prayer. Yet we have the power to "take him out" without even meeting him (like I did Sunday). We don't take aim, we fire up the coffee pot! Nothing personal, but shade-grown coffee costs too much and is not always waiting for us at the grocery store. At work we do not have control over the coffee served, so no use worrying—bottoms up.

Well, if you have not guessed, I was feeling angry by the end of the trip, and heartbroken that I am fighting a losing battle for this bird's winter habitat and eventual survival. Two years ago I wrote, "Are You Drinking-Up Habitat?" Since then we have lost a lot more rainforest. I contort in pain . . . lost so we the honorable environmentalists can drink our sun coffee while we talk about what we COULD do to help wildlife. According

to The Arizona Republic article September 4<sup>th</sup>, Brazil's last Atlantic rainforest is now being cleared for our coffee. This region near Camaca contains the highest diversity anywhere, tree species alone numbering 476 per 2.5 acre plot. The coffee farmer, named Bastos, is quoted asking a question in the last sentence. He remarks, "As long as there are poor people, if there is a tree somewhere that will fetch 2000 reals, you think it's going to stay there?" (Let's not buy this guy's coffee, at restaurants or anywhere!)

Shade-grown coffee places the economic value on good wildlife habitat, it tastes better, doesn't deplete the soil, and can be grown without pesticides. Birds and other wildlife provide a system of checks and balances, and disease spreads very slowly among different species of trees on a shade coffee plantation. This is our world . . . does shade-grown coffee really cost more?

Two years ago I twisted the arm of environmentally minded Arizona Health Foods. They said coffee didn't sell well there, but I told them MAS needed a place to buy coffee. They did us one better, putting American Birding Association coffee in four stores. They promised us 10% of all profits. A year ago I bought all but a few packages back on sale. I found the nerve to apologize for the loss last Monday. They told me, "It's okay, it's over." I recently helped buy out the Phoenix Zoo and the same at Paradise Nursery in Glendale last winter. I have not been a perfect model, and it's funny, my husband has had so much stale coffee he thinks all shade-grown tastes that way. I finally bought the stuff Mrs. Olsen soaks her feet in. It is not any better fresh! I think a lot of us are used to bad coffee. And sadly, I have been drinking sun coffee in restaurants and other places. We can do better!

The good news is Wild Bird Center at Scottsdale and Shea will have ABA coffee by November. The Desert Botanical Garden has it and we will have it for those who attend the meetings. When you dine at Pete's pre-meeting ask for shade-grown, it will be there. If you wish to have very fresh coffee, I have mini roasters available from Sustainable Harvest. They roast a pot's worth of shade-grown coffee in about five minutes. I will demo them at the November meeting. They cost \$69.00 with five whole pounds of green Costa Rican certified shade-grown coffee free—same as ABA coffee, just green. Unroasted, green coffee lasts for four years. Roasted, it lasts four months. Once you have a roaster, the price of green coffee is reduced, comparable to cheap coffee on sale. It tastes fantastic. Green certified shade-grown coffee is available in several varieties including Swiss process decaf. We will taste test the decaf at the November meeting. (I can't wait to see Evelyn's face when I tell her she has to roast it first!) We would like to buy the green coffee in bulk and sell it by the pound so it will be very affordable and convenient for everyone. If you don't have a roaster you can use an iron skillet stove top, but call me before you try it! We can make a difference!

For myself, the shade-grown challenge is toughest when I am not at home. I am making up polite, informative cards to leave at restaurants. Maybe we can carry a pot's worth with us to brew. But the challenge will be fun and well worth it. I will try to set a better example. Please join me . . .

## The Pledge

I, Jeanine Baker, do seriously swear . . .to protect winter migratory bird habitat. I promise to make a difference by simply withdrawing both usage and financial support of destructive sun grown coffee, until at least January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2001. I will seek to provide economic incentive to leave remaining wildlife habitat intact, by shifting my support to certified shade-grown coffee.

Most families in coffee countries are poor. They care more about feeding and clothing their children than saving songbirds and other wildlife. Let's help them do both! It is completely up to us, especially US! It is all in the kind of person you choose to be.

Jeanine Baker

(602) 447-0394

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[\[Top of Page\]](#) | [Table of Contents](#) | [Top of this Article](#) | [Bottom of Page](#) | [Newsletter Info Page](#)

---

[\[MAS home page\]](#) | [Join MAS](#) | [Chapter Info](#) | [Meetings](#) | [Activist Info](#) | [Other Sites](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [Field Trips](#) | [Calendar](#) | [AZ Birding](#) | [Christmas Count](#) ]

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