

## THE AZFO 12th ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

### 26-28 October 2018; Ajo, AZ



*Photo Credits (clockwise): Jennie MacFarland, Rich Glinski, Chris Rohrer and Richard Fray*

Ornithologists and birders from around the state near and far gathered in Ajo, AZ at the Sonoran Desert Inn Conference Center (SDICC) on 26-28 October 2018 for the AZFO's 12<sup>th</sup> annual meeting. The desert was a blanket of green welcoming 92 members from not *only* around the state, but as far as Illinois. An interesting fact: According to the [Ajo weather homepage](#), this year is one of the wettest on record with 12.56 inches of rain.

A total of 89 AZFO members and guests took part in the Friday and Saturday expeditions, and workshops. The meeting kicked off with Friday field expeditions to Gila Bend/Paloma Ranch Area, Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument (OPCNM) - Alamo Canyon, OPNM - Arch Canyon, and Quitobaquito Springs, Bud Walker Park, and the Ajo Sewage Ponds.



*Photo credit, Diane Drobka*

A Friday afternoon trip led by Troy Corman to the Gila Bend/Paloma Ranch area included 16 participants. Most of the participants had never birded this area prior so enjoyed the opportunity. While visiting the vast agricultural lands and several ponds, the team identified 56 species. Highlights included an unexpected pair of adult Greater White-fronted Geese at an irrigation runoff pond and two Black-bellied Plovers and a Dunlin at a rain-fill depression near a dairy. The plover is a rare fall transient through the area so was especially noteworthy.

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<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49474493>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49483766>

Eric Hough group of five through the lower portion of rugged, amazingly scenic Arch Canyon on the west side of the Ajo Mountains, then continuing farther up into the canyon where scrub-oak and Arizona rosewood thickets start to appear. The early October rains had made the place verdant with wildflowers and grasses, and the spring-like conditions were likely the reason why several Costa's Hummingbirds were already engaging in aerial displays and song. Highlights included a Red-naped Sapsucker, a Townsend's Solitaire, three American Robins, two Black-chinned Sparrows, two Fox Sparrows, over a dozen Dark-eyed Juncos including a female 'Slate-colored' bird, a Black-throated Gray Warbler, and two Townsend's Warblers.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49483645>



*Photo credits: Eric Hough*





*Photo credit: Jennie MacFarland and Richard Fray*



Eleven participants and leader Ryan O'Donnell started up Alamo Canyon in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument at 7:00 a.m. on Friday. Arch Canyon was unusually green, with many shrubs producing berries, thanks to the unusually wet early fall. The trip started up the trail to the old corral, and the continued off trail up the canyon. Many of the less common birds

observed were higher elevation or latitude species drawn in by the fruiting shrubs, including Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, and Cedar Waxwing, the latter being the first record for this location in eBird. One Lawrence's Goldfinch was contributed from the ongoing irruption this fall. In total 42 species were observed.

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<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49472500>

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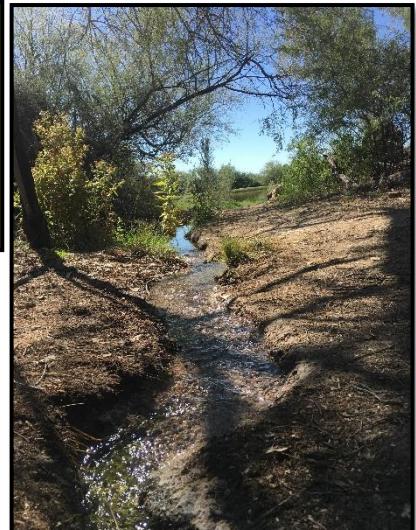
The Quitobaquito Springs trip was led by Chrissy Kondrat, with a special guest from OPCNM, Sean Britton. Sean shared to the group about current conservation efforts at this unique location along the border. Birding highlights included a good number of Black-throated Grays, two Sage Thrashers and a Wilson's Snipe. In addition, the group of 12 were fortunate to cross paths with Doug Danforth and Richard Bailowitz who located a 3<sup>rd</sup> U.S. record of a Baja bluet damselfly that morning.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49484935>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49484937>



*Photo credit: above, Pierre Deviche; right, Chrissy Kondrat*



The trip to Bud Walker Park and Ajo Sewage Ponds turned up many expected birds such as Vermilion Flycatcher and Yellow-rumped Warbler. The group did have lovely looks at Black-tailed Gnatcatcher and the sewage pond held a female Northern Pintail and excellent looks at a Greater Yellowlegs.

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49478197>

<https://ebird.org/view/checklist/S49543079>

*Photo credit: Doug Jenness*



Photo credit: Chris Rohrer



Photo credits: Chrissy Kondrat

The Friday activities concluded with a social hour in the lovely garden area of the SDICC. A big thank you to [Borderland Brewery](#) for creating the first ever AZFO brew, the Great Horned Owl IPA.



Photo credit: Tim Tibbitts by Jennie MacFarland

The Saturday sessions and banquet were held in the Quigley Auditorium at the SDICC. Carol Beardmore, AZFO president, welcomed a total of 92 attendees and introduced Richard Glinski and Tim Tibbitts as the meeting moderators. Richard and Tim did a phenomenal job as keepers of time and introducing the many talented speakers - with occasional entertaining banter between the two. Troy Corman described the Gale Monson Research Grant Program and announced the three grant recipients for 2018: Nick Beauregard, Kevin Clark and Ruby Hammond. Our first two speaker to kick off the

meeting were 2017 Monson Grant recipients. The first was Kerrie Anne Loyd who shared her work on *“Conservation of Western Burrowing Owls in an Urban/Suburban Desert Landscape.”* Next up was Eamon Harrity, who described the use of transmitters on Ridgway’s Rails in Yuma, to determine whether solar power stations are a threat to migrating rails. Lauren Harter, Arizona Bird Committee chair, presented an update of recent ABC decisions. Arizona is now officially home or a migration stop for 562 native or established introduced bird species. Lauren then introduced this year’s youth scholarship recipient, Stephanie Gastelum



Photo credit: Eamon Harrity by Jennie MacFarland

from Yuma. Stephanie, a junior at Northern Arizona University, has recently become interested in birding via Arizona Game & Fish Department, Christmas Bird Counts, and Prescott Audubon Society. Three past Youth Scholarship recipients attended: Melissa Folsom (2017), Sydney Smith (2017), and Caleb Strand (2016). AZFO Youth Scholarships are sponsored by Maricopa Audubon Society and Prescott Audubon Society.



Photo credit: Chrissy Kondrat

After the first break, Eric Hough presented the annual report on AZFO field expeditions. The morning session wrapped up with Shannon McNeil discussing "*From Thorny Chaco Winters To Summer Love Triangles: A Year in the Life of a Cuckoo.*" Followed by a short business meeting update. Cathy Wise reported that there are currently 124 AZFO members, and Diana Herron gave the financial report. The final two items of business to be addressed and voted on amendments to the bylaw's by Doug Jenness and proposed nominees for officers and board members presented by Carol Beardmore. The addition of two board members was voted on and accepted by members. Elected to board positions were Kerrie Anne Loyd, Edwin Juarez, and Chrissy Kondrat. Jennie MacFarland was voted in for a second term as AZFO vice-president. Diana Herron was officially voted in as treasurer – Diana was appointed as acting treasurer in February 2018.

David Vander Pluym discussed the identification and ranges of the subspecies of Cackling Goose, particularly the Aleutian subspecies, which is being reported more frequently in Arizona. Chris McCready urged participants to help augment the scope and value of eBird data by seeking out and birding under birded locations. Carol Beardmore described how the large quantity of eBird data that continues to be gathered can be used to analyze the vulnerability of species and help develop conservation plans.



Photo credit: Walter Thurber

Three posters were displayed in the meeting hall: "*Results of Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys Along the Upper San Pedro River: Evidence of Breeding Behavior in Mesquite Bosque*" by Stephanie Cobbold and Laura Stewart; "*Seasonal Movements of Crested Caracaras In Arizona – Preliminary Data*" by Doug Jenness, Richard Glinski and Joan Morrison; and "*Movement Patterns, Survivorship, and Home Range Size of LeConte's Thrasher on The Barry M. Goldwater Range*" by Chrissy Kondrat and Shawn Lowery. Caleb Strand took the prize for the audio quiz, which was well prepared and presented by Scott Olmstead. In addition, Caleb Strand placed first in the photo quiz prepared by David Vander Pluym and Lauren Harter. For his winnings, he took home one of AZFO's annual meeting

shirts. Who will take him on for 2019? Approximately \$2000 was raised between the meeting activities, used and new books table (Seventeen *Field Checklists of the Birds of Arizona* and five copies of *Counting Birds with Gale Monson* were sold), raffle, silent auction and the AZFO beer sales for the weekend.



Following the presentations, a social hour was held in the garden of the SCICC. At the evening banquet we presented the first ever AZFO Achievement Award to Janet Witzeman. Congratulations Janet, well deserved for your contributions to Arizona birding!

We were delighted to introduce this year's evening keynote, Nathan Pieplow, also sponsored by Maricopa Audubon Society. Nathan's talk both educated and captivated the audience, providing insights into the evolutionary relationship between families of passerine birds.

*Left: Janet Witzeman; photo credit, Rich Glinski*



Two workshops were held on Sunday: Becoming an Expert Listener Workshop conducted by Nathan Pieplow and the Gull ID Workshop in Puerto Penasco, MX with David Vander Pluym and Lauren Harter. Participants in Nathan's workshop enjoyed an intriguing insight into the sounds of the bird world, followed by a classroom session exploring the use of new skills. Those in the Gull ID workshop had ample opportunity to compare different ages and plumages of six species of gull, five species of tern, and two species of booby.



Photo credits (above and right): Chris Rohrer

A big thank you to **Sonoran Audubon** for supporting our keynote; **Prescott Audubon and Sonoran Audubon** the support on the Youth Scholarships; and to all who participated. The annual meeting was coordinated by Chrissy Kondrat. The expedition leaders were Troy Corman, Ryan O'Donnell, Eric Hough, Jennie MacFarland, Richard Fray, and Chrissy Kondrat. Workshops were led by Nathan Pieplow, Lauren Harter, and David Vander Pluym. The annual meeting shirt artwork was done by Sydney Smith, a 2017 Youth Scholarship recipient.

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Photo above: Sydney Smith and Rich Glinski; photo credit, Chrissy Kondrat

We look forward to seeing you at the next annual meeting in Flagstaff, **20-22 September 2019!** Don't forget to check out [FaceBook](#) and the [AZFO website](#) for upcoming events and news!

