

Sky Island Tours

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The Sky Island News

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April 2026

“At whatever moment you read these words, day or night, there are birds aloft in the skies of the Western Hemisphere, migrating.”

The first line in Scott Weidensaul’s excellent book *Living on the Wind*

Spring migration comes into full force this month. Birders in southern states anticipate the arrival of warblers, orioles, tanagers, hummingbirds, and other Neotropical migrants. Spring migration season is the best time of year, in my opinion, to be out birding. We can also expect to see more reptiles, insects, and arachnids making their first appearance of 2026 this month as well. The botanical world is also very much in evidence as spring annuals continue their blooming season. It is a great time to get out there and take in the show!

I would also like to extend a heartfelt THANK YOU to all who have donated to RKBearRescue. Your donations will help us help dogs in need of a nice home. A few weeks ago we took in our first dogs, Alfie and Abbie! It was a huge milestone and we look forward to getting them adopted and helping out more dogs. In particular, I want to shout out Kathy, Barb, and Dave and Sandy for their generous donations. On behalf of RKBearRescue, thank you.

I hope you like this month’s issue!

April Field Trip

Madera Canyon Birding. Monday, April 13. 7:00 – 11AM. Cost is \$10/person. Email (jeff@skyislandtours.com) to register. **LIMIT 15 PARTICIPANTS.**

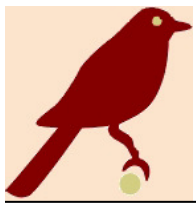


Madera Canyon is a world famous birding hotspot that is on the list of all birders that come to southeastern Arizona. This month we head out in search of things like Arizona Woodpecker, Hepatic Tanager, and, especially, Neotropical migrants. We will meet in the Safeway Shopping Center at I-19 and Continental Road and carpool to the site.

April Classes

Southern Arizona Moths: Surprising Nocturnal (Mostly) Diversity. Thursday, April 9. 7:00 – 9:00PM. Ajo Natural

History Association. 1850 N. Gila Highway. Ajo, AZ.



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Moths are a wondrously diverse group of insects that offer a lifetime of exploration regardless of where you live. This presentation explores the diversity of moths in southern Arizona focusing on those species that are most likely to be encountered by the naturalist. He will also discuss methods for attracting moths to your yard and how to identify what you see.

Whales, Dolphins, and Porpoises. Friday, April 10. 10AM-12PM. Las Campanas (565 W. Belltower Dr., in Green Valley). To register, call 648-7669 or visit <https://www.gvrec.org>.

Whales, dolphins, and porpoises are among the most beloved creatures on the planet. They include some of the most familiar mammals and some of the least known as well. In this class we explore the diversity of the world's cetaceans.

Trogons: Treasures of Arizona. Wednesday, April 15. 6-8 PM. Cochise College Center for Lifelong Learning. Call (520)-515-5492 or visit the Center for Lifelong Learning website ([Center for Lifelong Learning – Cochise College](#)) to register. This is a hybrid class, students having the option of attending virtually via Zoom or in person at Cochise College's Center for Lifelong Learning (2600 E. Wilcox, Room J-115, in Sierra Vista).

Trogons are among the world's most breathtaking birds, known for their vivid colors and elusive nature. Found across tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, Africa, and Asia, these birds have captivated birders for generations. In this class, you will dive into the fascinating natural history of trogons, with a special focus on the species that helped make southeastern Arizona a legendary birding destination. Join us to explore the beauty, behavior, and habitats of these stunning avian gems.

Mosses, Hornworts, and Liverworts. Thursday, April 16. 10AM-12PM. Virtual Class Via Zoom. Tucson Botanical Gardens. To register, use this link <https://tucsonbotanical.org/class-schedule/>. Part of TBG's Botanical Master class.



Callicladium haldaneanum
Ohio Moss & Lichen Association

Mosses, hornworts, and liverworts are small plants that can be easily overlooked. However, they represent a crucial stage in the evolution of land plants. They also differ from other land plants in some key respects. This class delves into these important plants.

Shorebirds: Nature's Globetrotters. Friday, April 24. 10AM-12PM. Las Campanas (565 W. Belltower Dr., in Green Valley). To register, call 648-7669 or visit <https://www.gvrec.org>.

The collective name shorebird encompasses such divergent birds as avocets, plovers, terns, auks, sandpipers, and many more. This class, timed for



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spring migration, dives into the world of shorebirds, including their diversity, feeding habits, and epic migrations.

Pima County Presentations

These online programs are free but you must register in order to receive the Zoom link to the presentation. The programs are recorded and all who have registered will receive the link to the recording. If you have questions or need assistance, contact us at: eeducation@pima.gov.

Visit our **Eventbrite** page at <https://bit.ly/Nature-Online-Tickets> to register. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation. **Note that we have switched ticketing platforms and this is a new link.**

Order Up! Velvet Worms. Thursday, April 2. 7-8PM. Virtual Presentation Via Zoom. Free, but registration required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/Nature-Online-Tickets>. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation.

Velvet worms are an enigma. They are not worms but look superficially like them. The biology of these creatures is poorly known, so they harbor many mysteries. This month we head to the tropics to look at these intriguing creatures.

Adventures in Birding: Swallows and Martins. Tuesday, April 7. 7-8PM. Virtual Presentation via Zoom. Free, but registration is required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/Nature-Online-Tickets>. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation.

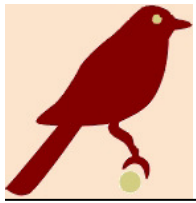


Gracing the sky with elegance and speed, swallows and martins are familiar birds around the world. The fact they like to hang out with each other increases their visibility. This month we explore the elegant and often colorful world of swallows and martins.

Seasonal Naturalist Fireside Chat: Spring – Nature’s Reawakening. Saturday, April 11. 7-8PM. Virtual Presentation Via Zoom. Free, but registration required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/Nature-Online-Tickets>. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation.

Spring is the time of Nature’s rebirth. Plants leaf out, flowers appear, the air is full of bird song. It is a great time to be outside! After a brief introduction, we open the floor to your questions about Nature.

The World of Mammals: Leaf-nosed Bats. Tuesday, April 14. 7-8PM. Virtual Presentation via Zoom. Free, but registration is required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/ticketsEE>. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation.



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The leaf-nosed bat family is a diverse one, including species that feed on insects, nectar, and pollen, to name a few things on the menu. We have discussed subgroups of this family in past episodes. But this month we take a wide-angle look at leaf-nosed bats.

Lifestyles of the Smooth and Scaly: Gartersnakes. Monday, April 27. 7-8PM. Virtual Presentation via Zoom. Free, but registration is required. To register visit <https://bit.ly/Nature-Online-Tickets>. Once registered you will receive a link to the Zoom presentation.

Gartersnakes occur throughout most of North America, often in or near water. This month we look at these colorful, striped serpents.

Southeast Arizona Birding Festival Registration Opens 4/28

The recent hot weather in March is a prelude of things to come, including the Tucson Bird Alliance's Southeast Arizona Birding Festival, this year from August 12 – 16. Registration for this fabulous event opens on April 28th. Many trips fill up fast, so register early.

The festival features field trips to all of the region's birding hotspots, expertly led by outstanding guides. There is also a long list of free presentations, a Nature Expo, a banquet, and much more. This year's featured guests are photographer/author Paul Bannick, singer/songwriter/birder Bonner Black, and author/illustrator Rosemary Mosco. I have heard Bonner and Rosemary on podcasts and I am looking forward to them coming to Tucson because they are going to be awesome! I have been a big fan of Paul's work for a long time – he is one of the best nature photographers out there.

The festival is a truly outstanding event. I hope to see you there!

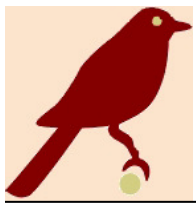
What's in a Name - Grosbeaks

With spring migration in full force this month it seems appropriate to look at some Neotropical migrants that birders throughout North America can expect to see soon. There are a lot of excellent candidates to discuss but grosbeaks jumped into my head, so that is the subject of this month's column.

Grosbeak comes from French, meaning 'big beak,' certainly an accurate term for these birds.

Unfortunately, the name has been applied to birds in multiple families, obscuring their relationships. Not all grosbeaks are close relatives despite sharing the name.

The first grosbeaks we will consider are in the Cardinalidae and include a couple of the most familiar birds in North America. These are birds in *Pheucticus*, which is Greek for 'shy or furtive.' This seems a bit of an odd choice to me as these birds are not particularly elusive, their songs ringing through summer woodlands and they are frequent attendants at feeders. Could this be due to the fact that they are sometimes found high in trees? I have no idea.



Black-headed Grosbeak (*P. melanocephalus*) is the western component of a species pair that is found across North America. The species and common names mean the same thing and refer to a true, but not unique, feature of the bird. English naturalist William Swainson described this beautiful bird in 1827 from specimens collected in Mexico.



The eastern half of the species pair is Rose-breasted Grosbeak (*P. ludovicianus*), certainly one of the continent's most striking birds. The specific epithet is the Latinized form of Louisiana, where the material used to describe (by Linnaeus in 1766) originated. I like the French name for the bird, 'Gros-bec de la Louisiane.' Sounds cool.

A rare stray from Mexico to southeastern Arizona is Yellow Grosbeak (*P. chrysopheplus*), ranging along the Pacific slope of Mexico and Guatemala as 2 disjunct populations. The species name means 'golden robed' in Greek. Every

sighting of this yellow and black stunner gets the Rare Bird Alerts humming. The southern Mexico/Guatemala population is much more orange than the northern birds. It was described in 1832 by Irish ornithologist Nicholas Vigors, who used specimens collected at San Blas, Nayarit for his description.

Another North American grosbeak in the Cardinalidae is the Blue (*Passerina caerulea*), another fetching bird. It was long classified in its own monotypic genus *Guiraca* (from a Paraguayan Native American word for 'a bird') until molecular data showed that it was the closest relative of the Lazuli Bunting (*P. amoena*). The genus name is Latin for 'sparrow-like,' in this case meaning sparrow-sized. The species name means blue. Blue Grosbeak was also described by Linnaeus (in 1758) from birds collected in South Carolina.

Moving across the Mexican border to south Texas, birders encounter the last cardinalid grosbeak, Crimson-collared Grosbeak (*Periporphyrus celaeno*), with most records being from the winter months. The genus translates as 'exceedingly dark red,' which is a great name for the males. The females replace the dark red of the male with olive green. The species name comes from 1 of 2 stories from Greek mythology (it is unclear which one is correct). In one tale Celaeno, the daughter of Atlas, was placed in the stars amongst the Pleiades after her death. In the other Celaeno, daughter of Neptune and Terra, was one of the Harpies who foretold of the destruction of Troy. In modern times the word is interpreted as 'black with blood,' which is a lot to put on such a lovely creature! German naturalist Ferdinand Deppe described this bird in 1830 from specimens from Veracruz, Mexico.

The finch family (Fringillidae) also includes birds named grosbeaks. Pine Grosbeak (*Pinicola enucleator*), a beautiful pinkish red and gray bird found across the Northern Hemisphere. An inhabitant of montane and northern coniferous forests, Pine Grosbeak is an irruptive finch, sometimes appearing in large numbers



beyond the normal wintering range. *Pinicola* is Latin for ‘pine tree dweller,’ which is certainly a fitting moniker. The species name means ‘nut cracker.’ While most of the diet is indeed vegetable matter, it seems to feed more on soft foods like buds and fruits than on hard seeds. Linnaeus also described this species in 1758 from birds collected in his native Sweden.



Evening Grosbeak (*Hesperiphonia vespertina*) is another member of the Fringillidae and, like Pine Grosbeak, is irruptive. It was formerly placed in *Coccothraustes* (meaning ‘to break seeds’) but was moved to its present genus due to molecular data indicating a deep divergence between the 2 genera. The genus name translates from the Greek as ‘evening sound.’ The species name also means evening. The association of the bird with the evening comes from a mistaken assumption by Henry Schoolcraft, who collected the type specimen, and thought that it only sang in the evening. That belief (and the specimen) were passed on to William Cooper at the Lyceum of Natural

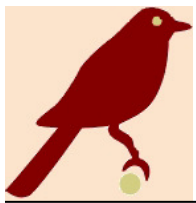
History of New York, who described the species in 1825. Schoolcraft collected the bird in Sault Saint Marie, Michigan.

The final grosbeak on the North American list is, unfortunately extinct, Kona Grosbeak (*Chloridops kona*). The massive bill was used to open the seeds of naio, a shrub or small tree in the Scrophulariaceae. The genus name means ‘greenfinch face,’ a reference to another group of fringillid finches. The species name refers to the Kona District on the Big Island, which was the type locality. British ornithologist Scott Wilson described Kona Grosbeak in 1888. The last sightings of this bird were in the 1890s. Extensive surveys since have not located any individuals. The extinction of Kona Grosbeak is attributed to diseases such as avian pox and avian malaria.

On a more positive note, North America’s grosbeaks are beautiful birds with lovely songs. May one cross your path soon!

This Tiger Packs a Punch

Now that days are warming up snakes are leaving their winter hideouts and making their presence known. Of course, this includes rattlesnakes, so it is a good time to start paying attention to where you place your hands and feet outdoors. Arizona is the rattlesnake capital of the US with anywhere from 13 – 16 species in the state depending on which taxonomy is followed. One of Arizona’s rattlesnakes is the Tiger Rattlesnake (*Crotalus tigris*).



Medium sized for a rattlesnake, Tigers reach a maximum length of around 3 feet. Dark bands cross the back over a variable, often blue-gray or orangish, ground color. The crossbands can be distinct or diffuse in intensity, with some individuals nearly patternless. There are no black bands near the tip of the tail. An oft-mentioned field mark for the species is that the head is relatively small in proportion to the body. In fact, Tigers have the smallest head relative to body size of any rattlesnake.

Due to their similarity in appearance, Tiger Rattlesnakes have often been confused with Southwestern Speckled Rattlesnake (*C. pyrrhus*). The two can be distinguished based on the small head, lack of black bands near the tip of the tail, and smaller size (Southwestern Speckleds reach over 4 feet) of Tiger. Originally described in 1859 as a separate species, the two were lumped together for decades until 1930 when they were again recognized as distinct.



Tiger Rattlesnakes are well camouflaged in their usual haunts in or near rocks in the Arizona Uplands. If you see Saguaros, you are in Arizona Uplands. Interestingly, the sexes appear to differ in microhabitat selection. Females seem to be more often found under the canopy of shrubs or trees while males were more often seen amongst prickly pear cacti and in woodrat middens.

The menu of these snakes is mostly lizards and rodents in equal proportions. It was long thought that the small head of Tiger Rattlesnakes was an adaptation for extracting lizards from rock crevices. However, this appears not to be the explanation for the small head size of Tiger Rattlesnakes.

On a drop-for drop basis, Tiger Rattlesnakes have the most potent venom of any Arizona rattlesnake. This is due to the presence of neurotoxins on top of the usual hemotoxins in the venom. Fortunately, Tiger Rattlesnakes are docile and reluctant to bite people. They also have low venom yields when they do bite, which is probably of little consolation if you are the unlucky soul on the receiving end of said bite. It should not need to be mentioned but rattlesnakes should never be handled or interacted with. Period.

The breeding season is typically from July to early October. Like all rattlesnakes, Tigers do not lay eggs but give live birth. Litter size ranges from 2 to 7 but is usually 2 or 3. Births occur during the monsoon season the following year.



Tiger Rattlesnakes are primarily nocturnal, especially during the hot summer months. They can sometimes be observed in places like Saguaro National Park among rocky outcroppings among Saguaros. They are shy snakes, often slipping away into crevices when approached. But they are a beautiful part of the Sonoran Desert's fauna.

Butterfly Profile: Great Purple Hairstreak

One of the most dazzling butterflies in North America, let alone Arizona, is only about the size of a quarter when the wings are folded. It is widespread but not common. On a given day out butterflying, one may see a couple of hundred American Snouts (*Libytheana carinenta*), but only a handful of this month's butterfly. This is the Great Purple Hairstreak (*Atlides halesus*).

The vivid blue of the upper wings (it really is a shame that we don't see this side more often) are such an intense shade of blue due to special black scales that surround it. These scales are refractive, absorbing nearly all the light that hits them, enhancing the brilliance of the blue. These scales create what is called 'ultrablack.' It is poorly named as it is more blue than purple on the upper wings. Females are less extensively blue above than males.



A member of the gossamer winged butterflies (Lycaenidae), which also includes blues and coppers, Great Purple Hairstreak is the largest hairstreak in Arizona and the second largest in North America. As such, they typically rest with the wings closed, hiding the brilliant blue upper wings from view. The underwings are black with red and white spots near the base of the wings. The hind wings have 2 thin extensions ('tails') with metallic green at their base. The abdomen is orange.

The caterpillars feed on mistletoes. Sightings of this gorgeous butterfly seem like a perfectly good reason to keep mistletoes in your yard! Some lepidopterists postulate that caterpillars sequester toxins from their host plants as an anti-predator strategy, but this has not been proven. Adults are avid flower attendants but can also be seen at mud.

The North American range of Great Purple Hairstreak extends from southern Oregon to eastern Virginia, occasionally straying north of the normal range limits. In some areas adults are on the wing from spring to fall but in southeastern Arizona they can be observed in all months.

As mentioned above, Great Purple Hairstreak is not named well. In fact, some authors have already taken to calling it the Great Blue Hairstreak. It's closest relative in North America is the equally spectacular Atala (*Eumaeus atala*) of south Florida and the West Indies.

Every day is brightened by sightings of this winged jewel!



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Moth in the Spotlight

It is surprising to some that there are a bunch of green moths out there. The most frequently observed are the emeralds, members of the geometer family (Geometridae). If you are lucky, you may see a Terloo Sphinx (*Proserpinus terlooii*). Yet another green moth is Bicolored Numia (*Numia bicoloraria*), which is also in the geometer family. The common name comes from Seabrooke Leckie's new *Moths of Western North America* guide, which was reviewed in last month's issue of the newsletter.

The forewings are usually green with a white discal spot. On some individuals the forewings are light brown. Most adults show dark blotches on the leading edge of the forewings. The hindwings are orange and have a reddish median line. It seems to me that the variation in forewing color could be the result of bleaching, as the intensity of the color varies considerably. Alternatively, this could simply be the result of individual variation.



The flight season of adult is extensive and they can be attracted to lights in all but the coldest months. It ranges from southern California to south Texas with records extending north to Kansas, where it is probably a stray. Adults are attracted to lights in small numbers. A few have turned up at my lights in the past 2 months.

Surprisingly for a moth that is often regarded as common, the larval food plant(s) of Bicolored Numia remain unknown. This could be due to geometer caterpillars being very well camouflaged, often expressing a remarkable resemblance to a dead twig. Their crypsis

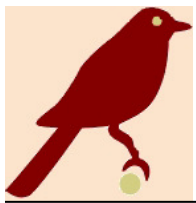
results from the food plants of most geometers are not toxic and the caterpillars are edible to predators.

Bicolored Numia was originally described in the genus *Chlorospilates* by Alpheus Spring Packard when he described it in 1876. It was moved to its present genus following a revision of Neotropical members of the subfamily (Ennominae) to which it belongs in 2002.

Larger and a different shade of green than emeralds (which are also showing up at lights now), Bicolored Numia is a distinctive moth. The light brown form is a bit more challenging to recognize. Either way, turn your lights on and see if they visit.

Book Review *Bats of the World: A Guide to Every Family.* Winifred Frick and Teague O'Mara. 238 pages. Princeton. 2026.

Hot of the presses is the newest addition to Princeton's excellent "Of the World" series, this one focusing on bats, surely some of the most specialized and remarkable creatures on Earth. The lead author is chief



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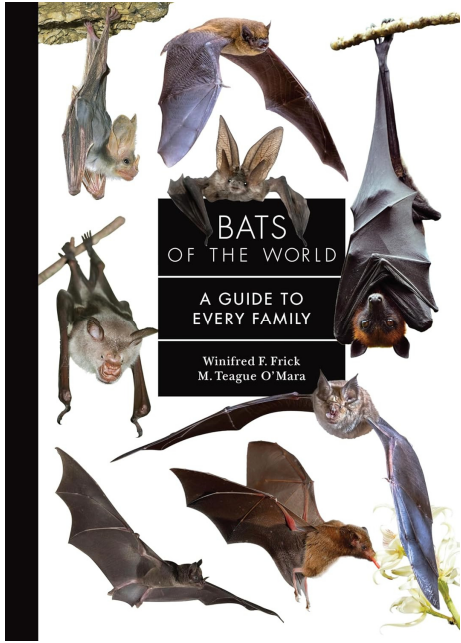
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scientist at Bat Conservation International and adjunct professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. The junior author is director of Conservation Evidence at BCI and adjunct professor at Southeastern Louisiana University. Combined the 2 bring many years of studying and teaching about bats to the table.



Like others in the series, this book begins with an introduction that includes discussion of topics such as flight, echolocation, migration, and many others. It nicely sets the table for the family and species accounts to follow. Like the rest of the book, it is beautifully illustrated.

The bulk of the book is made up of accounts of the 21 bat families currently recognized by mammalogists, starting with the Old World fruit bats and flying foxes (Pteropodidae) and concluding with the vesper bats (Vespertilionidae). Some species are given their own accounts to highlight species within the family under discussion. Depending on the family's diversity, accounts range from 2 to 49 pages in the vesper bats, the most species-rich family.

Accounts include a great deal of information for the family or species covered, providing readers with up-to-date facts. Each account includes a box with a range map, distribution, included genera, size range, roosting habits, foraging habits, and diet. As in other volumes of the series, the accounts are illustrated with outstanding color photographs, which show how diverse bats are in terms of color, ear size, facial ornamentation, and behavior. Bat faces are simply fantastic and the illustrations exemplify how cool (and, sometimes, weird) they are!

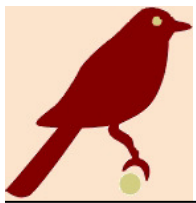
As we get into bat season this book will surely be on the nightstand or bookcase of bat enthusiasts everywhere. If you like these remarkable animals, it should be in your home, too.

Mammals of the Southwestern United States. Troy Best and John Hunt. 622 pages. 2025. Lynx Edicions.

Lynx has earned a reputation for publishing works of very high quality, including the *Birds of the World* and *Mammals of the World* series. Published last fall, the present volume adds to the Lynx legacy. It is an outstanding addition to the mammal books of North America.

The authors define the Southwestern US as the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Oklahoma. The book's subtitle, *Biology of Native and Some Extirpated, Extinct, and Introduced Species*, gives a good description of what is to be found between the covers.

The book begins with a chapter on the conservation of mammals in the region, highlighting some of the many threats faced by its mammalian fauna, such as habitat loss, mining, overgrazing, and many more. The chapter concludes with a table presenting each of the region's mammals and their conservation status globally, using International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) rankings, by state, and by subspecies.



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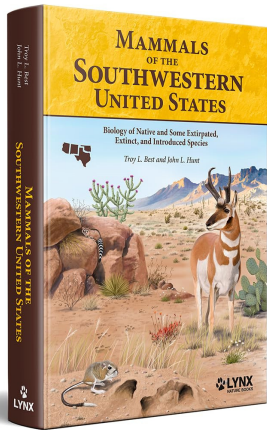
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The bulk of the book is the taxonomic section, beginning with the marsupials and ending with the hoofed mammals. Each family is provided with a brief introduction that includes a summary of its biology and diversity. Each order likewise gets a brief introduction before the family accounts.

Each species account include a description of the species, dental formula, size (in metric units), habitat, diet, predators, parasites and diseases, behavior, reproduction, conservation status, taxonomy, and ends with a remarks section. All accounts also include a color photograph and North American and regional range maps.

As may be surmised from the preceding paragraphs this book is loaded with great information. The book is certainly not a field guide. It is too hefty for that! But it will be the go-to guide for mammal lovers that live or travel in

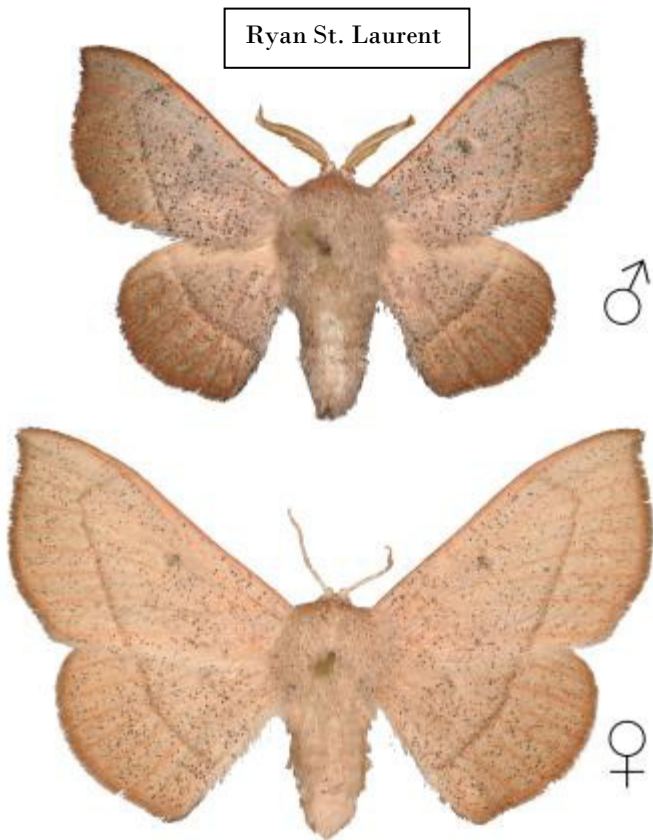
the 4 states covered for decades to come.



New Species Report

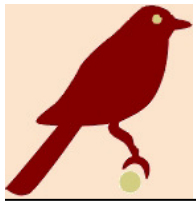
Readers of this column are well aware of the frequency with which new insects are being discovered. This month 3 new moths and several new beetles were in contention for this space. Ultimately, I decided to cover a new sack-bearer moth from Florida.

Ryan St. Laurent



Sack-bearer moths comprise a family (Mimallonidae) of over 320 species in 44 genera, with most of family's diversity concentrated in South America. North America now has 6 species, including one, *Cicinnus chambersi*, that was named in 2020 from specimens collected at Pena Blanca Lake, Santa Cruz County, Arizona. The new Florida moth is *C. albarenicolus* and comes from white sand scrub habitats in the central part of the state. The specific epithet is constructed from the moth's habitat *-albus* (white), *arena* (sand), and the suffix *-icola/us* (dweller).

The new species is similar to Melsheimer's Sack-bearer (*C. melsheimeri*), a widespread moth across much of eastern North America, ranging west to the Rocky Mountains. The new species differs in having a stronger pinkish hue to the wings, which are shorter and broader than in *melsheimeri*. Further, the forewing apex is not as acute. American lepidopterists John



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Franclemont mentioned back in 1973 that populations of *C. melsheimeri* in Florida were different from other eastern populations in having the forewings 'less produced,' (referring to the less acute apex). Following a review of most major North American collections, mitochondrial DNA confirmed that Franclemont was actually looking at this new species.

C. albarenicolus has been collected from 6 sites on the Florida peninsula. Unfortunately, it has not been observed or collected at 5 of those since the 1950s or 1960s. It is currently known to exist only in Ocala National Forest. The flight season is in the spring (March – May). The caterpillar food plants are unknown but are suspected to be oaks, which are the exclusive food plant of *C. melsheimeri*, the new form's closest relative and its congeners. It is hoped that targeted searches in white sand scrub habitats in other areas in spring may find other occupied sites. The new species is very likely of conservation concern.

This discovery exemplifies that there are still secrets to be uncovered, even in well-studied places like the US. The other new moth species that I considered for this column was found in the Chiricahua Mountains of southeastern Arizona and the other was discovered in Modoc County, California.

Who knows what else is out there waiting for someone to notice?

Did you know?

... that scientists recently documented Sperm Whales (*Physeter macrocephalus*) head-butting each other? This has long been speculated to occur as the head of these whales is massive, comprising about 1/3 of the total length of the animal. Think *Moby Dick*, which was based on the sinking of the whaling ship *Essex*, which was sunk near the Galapagos after taking 2 direct hits from a large male Sperm Whale. Researchers from St. Andrews University used drones to document the behavior for the first time in the Azores and Balearic Islands. Interestingly it was younger animals engaging in the activity not adult males, which can reach lengths of 54 feet and weights of 55 tons. The researchers are unsure if the activity was play, practice, or serious competition.

A nice use of technology to discover fascinating behavior!