

WELLSPRING NEWS

Summer 2020

Published by the Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc. (FOAC)

Tucson, Arizona

From the President

Dear Friends of Agua Caliente,

As the newly elected President of FOAC, my first action was to cancel the March Board meeting because of Covid19. We held the May meeting via Zoom and caught up with all the activities going on at the park. Although the park is reopened and the restoration is complete, community activities are not currently occurring due to the need to social distance, but eventually the Ranch House and Audubon Shop will re-open. There is a long-term plan to have some areas of the park open for reservations, and eventually people will also be able to reserve events in the Ranch House and Island.

The primary purpose of the recently completed work on Pond 1 was to conserve water. In the early 2000s, after nearly a decade of drought, the natural spring stopped being able to supply enough water to maintain the ponds. The county drilled a supplemental well in 2004 and had been pumping water for up to 18 hours a day to keep water in Pond 1. An estimated 70% of the water lost from the pond was from the bottom, and since the completion of the renovation, the pump is running only about 3 hours per day so it seems like the new liner will help us save a lot of water. With how 2020 has been going, we are very grateful to be able to enjoy our

beautiful park again. More information about the restoration is included on Page 2 of the newsletter.

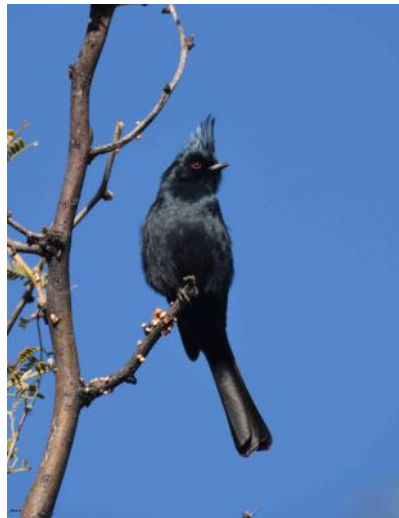


Photo by Susan Knoll

Phainopepla

FOAC was founded in 1993 by four people who wanted the County to maintain and restore the historic buildings on the property. Thankfully, they were successful and then continued to work with the county to get the park listed in the Historic Register as a Rural Historic Landscape (July 9, 2009). Two of these four founding members remain on the board (Pete Filiatrault and Sandy Sarah). We hold their enthusiasm and diligent activism as a model for us to continue to be active in supporting this park and working to preserve the contemplative nature of

this “Oasis in the Desert” along with its natural Sonoran Desert plant and wildlife habitats.

It’s been wonderful to visit the park this spring and summer and see what an important place this park is for people to meet, picnic, ponder nature, watch birds, paint, take photographs, walk dogs, and just find a bit of quiet time away from the busy world. I hope to see you enjoying the park. Please let us know if you have ideas and feel free to attend our board meetings!

**Pam Rossetter,
FOAC President**

Website

FOAC’s website has been redesigned! Thank you to the committee members for their time and efforts.

The website can be accessed at <http://www.FriendsOfAguaCaliente.Org>

Along with the key history of FOAC & Agua Caliente Park, the website includes information regarding significant issues affecting the Park, and current events for the month. You can also send an email to FOAC and find links to other related websites.

Main Pond Restoration Complete!

It was a year ago (May 2019) when Pima County drained the main pond and started working to restore it. This process involved removing cattails, dredging, thinning the palm trees, re-contouring the bottom, building a wildlife island, sealing the bottom with a polymer compound to reduce water usage, and building bridge abutments in preparation of replacing the bridge to allow access to the main island. An active Monsoon and the flow of the spring (yes, it started to flow again) delayed the process some and required modifications to the plan. By July, everything was in



Main pond looking north

full swing. Some wildlife/fish were relocated to Pond 2. For safety reasons the entire park was closed late August and remained closed until February 28, 2020. In January, 2020 workers began refilling the pond. During this entire process, the stream continued to flow and required diversion to other portions of the park. In May, 2020 Native fish were restocked into the pond including Longfin Dace and Gila topminnow. Future planned releases include the desert Pupfish and the Gila Chub. Pima County staff also cleaned most of the Red-Eared Slider turtles to remove remnants of the polymer material (it is non-toxic but they wanted to make sure there were no issues).



Southern portion of pond showcasing new wildlife island



Main Island showing the new bridge abutments

A new bridge will be built and installed this summer and the island will be opened. The Ranch House remains closed but the park is open for visitation. Thank you to Pima County for its diligent work to ensure Agua Caliente Park is preserved for future generations. Also, thanks to FOAC member support, we provided \$14,500 toward funding for the bridge project, including some money raised about 12 years ago for the initial bridge project. We are still seeking some grant funding to help offset the cost. For additional information, go to our website at: <http://friendsofaguacaliente.org/2019/02/15/pond-1-renovation/>. A drone video showing the process and showcasing the park is also on our website at: <http://friendsofaguacaliente.org/videos-agua-caliente-park/>. If you have not been out to the park recently, come check it out and enjoy the peace and serenity.

Jim Knoll,
FOAC Treasurer

Facebook

FOAC is on Facebook. Follow us to stay abreast of late breaking and current events. To find FOAC, search "Friends of Agua Caliente Tucson" within Facebook or access us from our website. We will post current events & pictures so please "like, follow, comment, and share".

Electronic Newsletter

Sending the newsletter electronically saves FOAC postage and you receive it in color. If you did not receive an electronic version and would like to be placed on the electronic distribution, please send an email to: info@FriendsOfAguaCaliente.Org

We do not release our database to anyone.

Nature Corner: Do You Know Your Ducks?

Where there is water you will find ducks in arid country. The main pond will soon see the return of water birds that left during the renovation. Also returning to the pond are aquatic plants, aquatic insects, frogs, snails and small fish.

Common Sonoran Desert Species :

Northern Pintail – Feeds in shallow water where they upend or submerge their head and neck while swimming. Some feed on land.



Photo by Susan Knoll

Northern Shoveler – Feeds in shallow water using large, spoon shaped bill and comblike teeth to strain out plants and animal matter.

Redhead – Forage by diving or upending in shallow water. Has a large, puffy, reddish-colored head.

Ruddy Duck – This duck skitters across the water surface to gain speed for take-off.

American Coot – Found in Freshwater cattails in marshes and ponds. In swimming, they pump their head back and forth. Easily glide through marshes.

Black-Billed Whistling Teal – Whistling sound comes from the wings.

Bluewing Teal – Earliest to come to our state.

Greenwing Teal is very common in Arizona.

Cinnamon Teal – Only duck species to range in two hemispheres.

There are dozens of species of water birds and all stop to rest and feed at cattle tanks, ranches, lakes, ponds, golf courses, desert marshes and rivers. States band ducks to trace their migration and flying routes. Most species of water birds migrate in September; on their way to Mexico and south. Some will stay and reproduce if food and nesting conditions are available. The easiest way to identify ducks is with color publications.

Remember, DO NOT feed waterfowl. It makes them sick.

**Judy Gray, Naturalist
& FOAC Board Member**

Membership in the Friends of Agua Caliente

Join Friends of Agua Caliente!

Thank you to all of our loyal supporters of the Friends of Agua Caliente and the Park! If you have not yet renewed, please consider supporting FOAC. Our ability to support the park & NRPR with funding and items they cannot normally purchase within their budget cycle is tremendous and we owe it all to you.

As of June 2020 we have 237 supporters (members and donors) and through your generosity, we have raised \$18,672 this fiscal year.

It is not too late to join FOAC or renew your support. We would love to have you on our team.

The Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) Non-Profit Corporation, therefore all donations are tax deductible. Membership is based on the following schedule:

Individual	\$15
Family	\$25
Organization	\$50
Donation (any amount appreciated)	

Please send name, address, phone number, and email along with a check to: Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc., PO Box 32005, Tucson, AZ 85751-2005 or contact Jim Knoll at [info\[at\]FriendsOfAguaCaliente.org](mailto:info[at]FriendsOfAguaCaliente.org). Additional membership information is also on the FOAC website listed at the bottom of the newsletter.

Your dedication to the Park and FOAC is greatly appreciated. We cannot do what we do without you!

**Jim Knoll, Treasurer
& Committee Chairman**

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2020 Board of Directors

Friends of Agua Caliente, Inc.

P.O. Box 32005

Tucson, AZ 85751-2005

Tucson Audubon at Agua Caliente Park

Tucson Audubon inspires people to enjoy and protect birds through recreation, education, conservation, and restoration of the environment upon which we all depend. Pima County generously donates space in the Ranch House for our Nature Shop. The shop is closed until at least September. When the county opens the Ranch House we will open the Nature Shop.



Although we're not sure what the future has in store, we're very grateful for the partnership we've had with Pima County.

We look forward to reopening in the fall and are really excited about our redesign of the Nature Shop, which includes new fixtures we've added to the shop and allows more views of the main pond.

Please visit the Tucson Audubon's Nature Shop downtown at 300 E University Blvd. Proceeds from the Nature Shop benefit Tucson Audubon programs. You can also check out the latest Tucson Audubon news at tucsonaudubon.org.

**Liz Harrison,
Nature Shop Volunteer**