

## **WORKSHOP SESSION 2 – March 20,2006 – Chapter Building:Successful Fundraising Practices**

### **San Diego Audubon Avian Adventures Audubon Assembly, Asilomar, California March 19-21, 2006**

By  
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#### **History:**

San Diego Audubon has offered over 50 local birding trips per year for years, but until 2002 we had never ventured farther than Kernville, Big Bear Lake or the Salton Sea. At our annual retreat in August 2002, we were searching for ways to increase our income. We decided to offer some longer trips to more distant places and charge a modest amount to raise funds for the chapter. Thus Avian Adventures was born with a committee of four. The same four have continued to plan and lead many of the trips.

Our first trip (The Gathering of Eagles) was an “easy” three-day trip to the Klamath Basin in Oregon and northern California in January 2003. We took 40 San Diego Auduboners. I’ll have more to say about this not so “easy” trip. Since then we have offered the following Avian Adventures:

#### **2003**

- August 15-17 Arizona Sky Islands (SE AZ) 20 persons (Sold Out)

#### **2004**

- January 9-11 Bosque del Apache 30 persons (Sold out)
- April 25-28 East Texas Easy (High Island, Etc.) 20 persons (Sold Out)
- August 10-15 S E AZ with Chiricahua extension (18 persons)
- November 1-8 Trinidad (Asa Wright Center) 21-5 extend to Tobago (Sold Out)

#### **2005**

- January 14-16 Bays and Birds (East Bay, Marin, SF) 15 persons
- April 13-17 So Texas (Rio Grande Valley) 20 (Sold Out, 13 waiting list)
- August 11-14 SE Arizona 20 persons (Sold Out)
- Sept 30-Oct 7 Canopy Tower, Panama 19 persons (Sold Out, 16 waiting list)

#### **2006**

- Jan 28-Feb 8 Costa Rica (stay in 4 places) 16 persons (Sold Out, waiting list)

Other trips planned for 2006 are

- April 19-23 Rio Grande Valley 20 possible (Sold out)
- June 3-11 Alaska including pelagic trip 18 possible
- August 8-13 SE AZ including Chiricahuas 20 possible
- Nov 3-13 Canopy Tower & El Valle Lodge, Panama 19 possible

Of course we have plans for 2007, but they are not gelled. We try to plan one year in advance.

#### **An Avian Adventure Program Needs:**

1. A committee willing to work together and plan to go themselves on as many trips as possible. We try to have two Avian Adventures committee members or SDAS field trip leaders on each trip. This got expensive for committee members, so we’ve established that two leaders will pay half price for trips and not need to pay the donation to SDAS.
2. A written statement regarding the responsibilities of and benefits to field trip leaders. We’ve had to recruit some leaders from SDAS. Our “Friends” members are paying for these trips, so it’s important that leaders are more than just good birders. They have to be helpful and **nice** or you will hear about it fast and people won’t go on any more trips.
3. At least one member who will act as the point person to make certain that motel, lodge, airline, van, guide, etc. costs are correct. All members contribute information, but one person should act as coordinator to make sure that information that goes out in your newsletter is on time and accurate.

## **Eleven things we have learned to make the trips work smoothly:**

1. We took 40 people on our first trip to Oregon. Although it consisted of a plane trip from San Diego to Sacramento and a bus trip to Klamath, we know not to take 40 people. It's simply too many. We limit our groups to 20 now, and some international trips have only 16 to 19, depending on lodge and transportation facilities.
2. On international trips, it's important to have one or two Avian Adventures committee members on the trip to escort trippers through the airports, give out tickets, handle tipping, resolve any room problems, etc. Even though there are professional guides at the destination lodges, people want to feel that they are part of a traveling Audubon family.
3. Have all trippers sign a liability waiver. It's a good way to get them to list their doctors' names and any medical problems and to **remind them to get trip insurance**. You can personalize a liability waiver that you get from another group that offer trips. We modified one that we got from the San Diego Natural History Museum.
4. Make sure your chapter has the \$2,000,000 liability insurance that the van rental companies in the U.S. require. Budget, especially, has asked us for proof of our insurance.
5. Get the names of as many standbys as you can. You will be surprised at how many standbys will not be able to go at the last minute because they have made other plans. Even though you have enough standbys to form another trip, don't be tempted to quickly put another trip together at the last minute and use up your standbys.
6. On our U.S. trips, we decided to have people pay for their own lunches and dinners, and it has worked well. We go to motels that offer free breakfasts, but for lunch and dinner people get their own. We have found that they prefer it because some don't eat lunch and others prefer their own food that they may buy at a market. A fast-food lunch stop works well. If you go into a regular sit-down restaurant with 20 people for lunch, you will lose at least two hours of birding. Sometimes we make arrangements for box lunches that trippers pay for. We always have a special dinner together on the last night of the trip. It's a chance to recap, give awards and have fun.
7. Contact the Audubon chapter where you are going and make arrangements to have someone locally go with you as a guide. Offer to reciprocate if they bring a group to your area. We've done that in Southeast Arizona and Klamath Falls and it has worked well. Treat the local Audubon guide to dinner and present him/her with your chapter t-shirt or hat.
8. It takes considerable up-front money for group airline e-tickets but you can pass the savings along to the travelers. It's necessary to book well in advance for group air, and a significant deposit is required. Some hotels (Alaska) demand full payment in advance. This can be a little scary when you have \$10,000 or \$15,000 out and you haven't even advertised the trip yet.
9. Establish how much the local chapter donation per person will be for each type of trip. On domestic three and four day trips, we decided on \$125 dollars. For longer domestic trips, it's \$200 to \$250. For international trips it's \$300. It took us some time to come to these amounts, but it's important that the volunteers who work so hard to create the trips earn money for the chapter and there are considerable risks and liabilities on each trip. We were not charging enough during the first year, but we learned from each trip.
10. Be sure to include in your trip cost any bridge or road tolls, entrance fees to parks, preserves or private sanctuaries like the \$5 entrance fee to High Island or the amounts charged by Nature Conservancy. For 20 persons, if you miss a \$5 per person entrance fee, you've lost \$100 for your chapter. Gas costs can also vary from region to region. It's a good idea to add a \$15 or \$20 buffer per person to cover these exigencies.
11. The amount of the donation to the chapter is included in the cost of the trip, but we don't say that up front because unpredictable extra costs can reduce that tax-deductible amount. After the trip we send a letter to each person to tell the amount that can be deducted for tax purposes. That after-trip letter includes a trip bird list and any new information about upcoming trips.