



The Sky Island News

Vol. 1 No. 6

August 2010

The month of August starts the second half of the monsoon. One of the characteristic signs of the monsoon for me is the mating chorus of spadefoot toads, Sonoran Desert toads, and other toads that gather at flooded ponds. Here in Vail, a recent strong storm filled the temporary pond just down the street. The little pond is the singles bar and nursery for hundreds of toads and their young. The night air is now alive with the love songs of amorous male toads. Soon the water will hold the precious cargo of the next generation of desert amphibians. In my opinion, the miraculous existence of amphibians in the desert is one of the wonders of the Sonoran Desert. If you live near a breeding pond, I urge you to get out enjoy the sights and sounds of toad night life!

August Field Trips

Butterflies of Brandi Fenton Park. August 4. 8:00AM-12:00PM. Call 322-5627 or go to oasisnet.org to register.

Join us for a morning stroll through the butterfly garden at Brandi Fenton Park (located on the south side of the River Rd.-Alvernon Way intersection).

This trip is a good introduction to many of the butterflies that can be seen in Tucson. The garden also offers many plants to consider if you are starting your own butterfly garden.

Bring plenty of water, sunscreen, snacks, a hat, and comfortable walking shoes. Close-focus binoculars, camera, and butterfly field guide, if you have them, are great to bring along.



Gulf Fritillary



Sky Island Tours
Jeff Babson
Jeff@SkyIslandTours.com
www.SkyIslandTours.com
Phone: 520-488-8551

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Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival. August 4-8. Knights of Columbus Hall (156 W. Kayetan Dr). Sierra Vista, AZ.

I will be leading owling trips once again for this wonderful festival based in Sierra Vista. I will lead one trip per night on Wed., Thurs., and Fri. nights. Times are from 7:00PM-9:30PM. Target species are Whiskered Screech-Owl, Elf Owl, Common Poorwill, and Mexican Whip-poor-will, which was recently given full species status by the American Ornithologists Union. Visit the festival's website, <http://www.swwings.org>, to register.

Beetles of Madera Canyon. Saturday, August, 14. 9:00AM-12:00PM.

In a first for Sky Island Tours, we will visit Madera Canyon in the Santa Rita Mountains to search for beetles! We will explore several habitats and can expect to see leaf, longhorned, scarab, whirligig, and other types of these amazing insects.

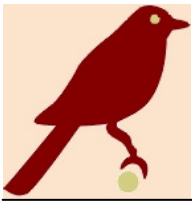


This is a great trip for children and grandchildren!

We will meet in Tucson at the parking area at I-10 and Houghton Rd. (on the west side of Houghton) at 8:00 AM. For those in the Green Valley area, we will meet at the McDonald's at I-19 and Continental Rd. at 8:45 AM. Please bring close-focus binoculars (if you have them), water, sunscreen, snacks, hat, and sturdy walking shoes. Please call or email if you plan on attending. Cost is \$10 per person. Accompanying children are free.

Butterflies of the Santa Catalinas. Wed., August 18, 8:00AM-12:00PM. Contact Pima County Department of Natural Resources (520-615-7855 or education@pima.gov) to register. Reservations required. Cost \$10.

Join us on a quest to spot summer butterflies in a lush, high elevation habitat on Mt. Lemmon. Some of the species we hope to see are Two-tailed Swallowtail, Western Azure, Mourning Cloak, American, Painted, and West Coast Ladies, Silver-spotted and Taxiles Skippers and many more. For ages 12 and up.



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August Classes

Detailed Class descriptions are available on my website (www.SkyIslandTours.com)

A Taste of the Tropics. August, 2. 10:00AM-12:00PM. Las Campanas (565 W. Bell Tower Dr.). Call 648-7669 to register.

Butterflies. August 3. 10:00AM-12:00PM. Tucson Junior League (2099 E. River Rd.). Call 322-5627 or go to oasisnet.org to register.

Arizona's Mammals. August 5. 12:00PM-1:00PM. Knights of Columbus Hall (156 W. Kayetan Dr). Sierra Vista, AZ. Part of the Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival. Admittance is free, but visit the festival's website, <http://www.swwings.org>, to register.

Amazing Arachnids. August 10. 10:00AM-12:00PM. Atria Valley Manor (5549 E. Lee St.) Call 322-5627 or go to oasisnet.org to register.

Bounteous Beetles. August 12. 10:00AM-12:00PM. Atria Bell Court Gardens (6653 E. Carondelet). Call 322-5627 or go to oasisnet.org to register.

Hummingbirds Part 1: Identification. August 16. 7:00PM-9:00PM. Northwest Art Center (7770 N. Shannon Rd.). Contact Pima County Natural Resources (877-6090) to register.

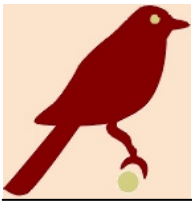
Amazing Arachnids. August 17. 7:00PM-9:00PM. Northwest Art Center (7770 N. Shannon Rd.). Contact Pima County Natural Resources (877-6090) to register.

Beautiful, Bountiful Butterflies. August 21. 7:00PM-9:00PM. Northwest Art Center (7770 N. Shannon Rd.). Contact Pima County Natural Resources (877-6090) to register.

Bounteous Beetles. August 23. 7:00PM-9:00PM. Northwest Art Center (7770 N. Shannon Rd.). Contact Pima County Natural Resources (877-6090) to register.

Beautiful, Bountiful Butterflies. August 25. 10:00AM-12:00PM. Las Campanas. 565 W. Bell Tower Dr.). Call 648-7669 to register.

Bounteous Beetles. August 26. 6:00PM-8:00PM. Tucson Botanical Gardens (2150 N. Alvernon Way). Call 326-9686 X19 to register.



Beetle Mania!

This month's Sky Island Tours field trip (and a number of classes) shines a spotlight on beetles.

Beetles belong to the order Coleoptera, which means 'sheath wing'. The name is derived from one of the more distinctive characteristics of beetles, the structure of the wings. Most beetles possess two pairs of wings. The forewings are usually either hard and brittle or thick and leathery. Either way, the forewings have evolved to protect the hindwings, which are membranous and used for flight. The forewings in beetles are given the name elytra (sing. elytron).



Beetles are the most diverse organisms on Earth. Over 350,000 species have been described. Many entomologists believe that the true number of beetle species in existence exceeds one million. Some believe that the total may be more on the order of 3-4 million!

Beetles are everywhere. They are found in every terrestrial habitat on Earth. Several families are aquatic, being especially common in ponds and along the margins of streams. Beetles can be found under rocks and logs, on flowers and foliage, in the soil, and at lights at night. They are found everywhere you look.

Depending on which classification scheme one follows, there are about 113 families of beetles. They range in size from one one-hundredth of an inch to almost eight inches in length. Many are black or brown in color. However, some rival butterflies in the brilliance of their colors.

Among the more popular beetles are the ladybird beetles in the family Coccinellidae, which are famous for their predatory habits on aphids, mealybugs, and other garden pests. You can find ladybugs, as these beetles are commonly called, by the thousands up in the Sky Island mountain ranges right now.





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Jeff Babson
Jeff@SkyIslandTours.com
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Among beetles enthusiasts several beetle families are popular. Among these are jewel, leaf, scarab, and longhorned beetles. Their popularity stems from their bright, often metallic, colors, bold patterns, and, at least in some cases, their large size.

The Bounteous Beetles class that I offer provides an overview of the fascinating insects. I hope to see you at an upcoming class!

Visit My Blog!

If you haven't stopped by my blog (<http://www.SkyIslandTours.com/blog>) yet, what are you waiting for? I post articles, photos, commentary, and random thoughts about the natural world. I try to update it everyday. Recent posts have discussed spiders, beetles, butterflies, and lizards. So, check it out, and let me know what you think. Remember to visit often and please leave your comments on the blog. I look forward to reading your comments!