

Winter Visitors: Ducks and Friends

by Carol Wheeler

Photos by Wayne Colony

Have you ever watched a flock of birds migrating overhead and wondered where they were going and why they would undertake such a long journey? In San Miguel one may well wonder how and why any of these migrating birds find their way to the small "presa," or reservoir, at El Charco del

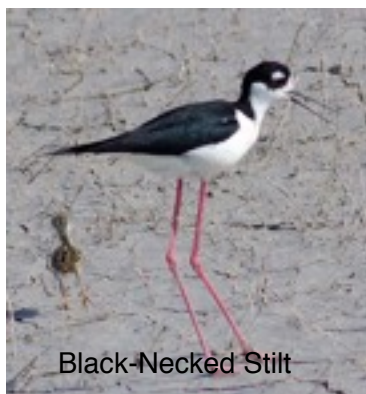


Wilson's Phalarope

Ingenio, our botanical garden. The delicate and beautiful Wilson's

Phalarope, for example, migrates each winter from the far north to the high lakes of the Andes, but every year, without fail, a small group of phalarope splash down in the waters of the presa at El Charco to rest for a few weeks before resuming their long journey.

Your questions will be answered at an Audubon presentation on Tuesday, November 11th, at 3 pm, when Wayne Colony, co-author of the book "Wild and Wonderful: Nature Up Close in the Botanical Garden El Charco del Ingenio", will give a lecture and slide presentation on the migration and habits of the ducks and shorebirds that winter in El Charco. The event will take place at the Santa Ana Theater at the Biblioteca Publica.



Black-Necked Stilt

Every year hundreds of ducks and shorebirds arrive in El Charco to spend the winter months of November to February. Northern Shovelers, Pintails, Green-winged Teal and other ducks join the resident Mexican Duck to swim in the waters of the presa. American Avocets and the long-legged Black-necked Stilt arrive to stalk the mudflats, probing for food. Other shorebirds such as the Long-billed Dowitcher and several species of sandpipers - Western, Least, Stilt and Yellowlegs - also often spend several weeks in El Charco. A visitor to the botanical garden during the winter may be lucky enough to see 20 or more wintering species at a time.

Special On-the-Ground Follow-up: On

Sunday, November 16th, the regular monthly Audubon bird walk, led by Bob Graham, our nature expert just returned from Canada, will go to El Charco and Parque Landetta, the sites referred to in Colony's talk, to see the very migratory water fowl and other seasonal birds he describes.



Ruddy Duck

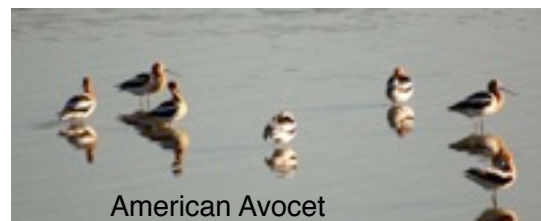
On his talk, Colony will also discuss the various wetland habitats in the botanical garden - the presa, mudflats and marshes - and why they attract the species that they do. He'll also talk about duck and shorebird behavior and the differences between species. For example, you'll learn why some ducks are "divers" and others are "dabblers," and how to tell a Western Sandpiper from a Least Sandpiper based on feeding behavior. And incidentally, don't worry if you're not an expert birder. Colony's lecture will be fun as well as informational for just about everyone. And his photographs of ducks and shorebirds from "Wild and Wonderful" will show the various flyers and waders up-close and in beautiful color.

As always, admission to the lecture is free to members of Audubon de San Miguel and 50 pesos to others. However, an annual membership in Audubon is 300 pesos, which can be paid at the door and will admit the new member to this and many other Audubon events throughout the year.



Blue-winged Teal

Bob Graham's Sunday walk to the Charco meets at 8 am at the Instituto Allende. Joining the walk costs 100 pesos, but it's free to Audubon members.



American Avocet