



## **AZFO Student Scholarship Recipient Essay 2018**

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This year I was very excited to attend the Arizona Field Ornithologist's yearly meeting in Ajo, Arizona thanks to the generous donations from the Maricopa and Prescott Audubon Societies to the Youth Scholarship. I found out about the annual meeting from my friend and mentor Lin Piest of Arizona Game and Fish in Yuma, Arizona. Through the website I was able to locate the scholarship and thought it was such an exciting opportunity to apply and if I were to get the scholarship meet so many other individuals interested in birds. Thankfully I got the scholarship and was able to attend!

I had driven through Ajo once before and thought it looked like a neat city so I was looking forward to attending the conference there. I arrived Friday night and attended the socializing mixer and was able to chat with people about their earlier birding experiences that day. On Saturday there were so many presentations and it was amazing to learn about all these projects so close to home (I'm from Yuma, Arizona).

I enjoyed Tim Tibbitts' presentation on birds found at Organ Pipe National Monument, followed by the presentation on Gale Monson research grants and what a great contribution those grants are making in bird research. Kerrie Anne Loyd's research on burrowing owls carried out in Lake Havasu City was particularly interesting because of the prospect of resident birds. Another interesting presentation was that of Eamon Harity on Yuma Ridgeway Rails and how they're flying long distances in what appears to possibly be migration.

After the fabulous presentations on Saturday and a beautiful dinner at Sonoran Desert Inn I was able attend the "Becoming an Expert Listener" workshop by Nathan Pieplow. It was a very thorough workshop and started out with the basics of listening to birds which I found very helpful as I am still learning. Nathan Pieplow was very knowledgeable on everything he spoke about and I found a lot of his tips and tricks helpful when trying to characterize different sounds. It was a good ending to a great weekend and I am so thankful I was able to attend. Thank you AZFO, Prescott Audubon, and Maricopa Audubon for helping me attend and providing opportunities for youth to be involved in Arizona's birds.