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For immediate release
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PAG Regional Council OKs Watchable Wildlife Resolution

Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Council approved a resolution on Dec. 9 to support the development of tourism-related activities for watching wildlife in southern Arizona, which is known for its exceptional diversity of bird species.

Tourism, transportation and employment associated with watchable wildlife currently contribute an estimated $1.5 billion annually to the state’s economy.

The resolution emphasizes the potential economic value of increased tourism associated with birding in the region. PAG’s Environmental Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) wrote the resolution after learning about this topic in a presentation from the Tucson Audubon Society.

“Arizona is one of the top destination states for birders because of its bird diversity, and southeastern Arizona has the opportunity to capitalize on this high level of interest among birders,” said Stephen Dean, Chair of EPAC. “As birding headquarters for southeastern Arizona, Pima County could develop resources and amenities to increase the time birders spend at local birding hot spots.”

The Audubon Society is spearheading a World Cup of Birding in summer 2011 and continues to work on field guides and birding trail maps to generate interest in local birding.

“Our region is in great need of economic stimulus and local governments support this effort as a means of enhancing economic vigor,” said Claire Zucker, manager of PAG’s Watershed Planning program.

Pima Association of Governments is an association of local, state and tribal governments with a mission to build consensus among its members and the public on regional planning for transportation, air quality and water quality. Please visit www.PAGnet.org for more information.

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PIMA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
WATCHABLE WILDLIFE RESOLUTION

A Resolution to Support Development of Watchable Wildlife as an Economic Resource in the Eastern Pima County Region

Whereas, the region is in great need of economic stimulus and our local governments seek to enhance our economic vigor;

Whereas, tourism and visitors contribute substantially to the economic vitality of the region through lodgings, food, transportation and employment, with watchable wildlife contributing around $1.5 billion annually in total economic impact to the state’s overall economy.

Whereas, birds are the most common watchable wildlife to be photographed, fed or observed;

Whereas, protection of bird habitat is critical to preserve the places where birds and wildlife can thrive;

Whereas, Arizona is one of the premier destination states for birding because it is one of the top three states for bird diversity and because more than half of all North American bird species occur in Arizona including several species that cannot be reliably found anywhere else in the United States;

Whereas, there are numerous superb local and regional birding sites including Sweetwater Wetlands, Avra Valley Wastewater Reclamation Facility, Mount Lemmon, Sabino Canyon, Reid Park, Catalina State Park, Madera Canyon, the Nature Conservancy’s Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, the Wilcox Playa, Ramsey Canyon in the Huachuca Mountains, and Cave Creek in the Chiricahua Mountains;

Whereas, eastern Pima County is the birding headquarters for southeastern Arizona;

Whereas, bird tourism is an untapped opportunity for marketing our region;

Whereas, the number of birders visiting, dining and finding lodgings in the region can be increased significantly by tournaments such as World Cup of Birding, festivals such as the Tucson Bird and Wildlife Festival, and marketing tools such as Tucson birdfinding guides, field guides and birding trail maps;

In Consideration Thereof, the PAG Regional Council:
Encourages continued support of the watchable wildlife industry and the health of our environment and recognizes them as valuable elements contributing to the strength of our economy.