



# The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LVI, No. 1

Spring 2007

Lesser Black-backed Gull



# MAS Meetings & Programs February–May 2007

Cynthia Donald

Please join us for a terrific year of speakers with a wide range of topics – bird flu, Liberty Wildlife, Birding by Ear, Thailand, roadrunners, Bhutan, East Africa, and more!

Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, September through May. Our May meeting is our Annual Banquet with a location to be announced. Please check our web site or newsletter for the location of the May 2007 banquet.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden. The Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix, which is approximately ½ mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance

Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. There will be signs directing you to the meeting. Although there is no charge to attend our general membership meetings, the Annual Banquet does require a dinner reservation and associated cost.

A pre-meeting dinner will be held at Pete's 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue in Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) for the September through April meetings. Come and join us at 6:00 p.m. for a delicious meal (no-host), meet our guest speaker and say "howdy" to other birders. Meals at Pete's average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

## February 6, 2007

Alvin and Arlene Scheuer  
Nesting Roadrunners

Join Sonoran Audubon members Al and Arlene Scheuer as they present a video they created of the breeding, nest building, egg laying, feeding and fledging of a roadrunner family from February through May 2001 on their two-acre Backyard Wildlife Habitat. Their property has been certified by the National Wildlife Federation, and contributes research to the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology. Many of us have seen adult roadrunners in Arizona, but how many have had the privilege of actually seeing a family raise and fledge young?

## March 6, 2007

Bob Witzeman Birds of Thailand

Bob is well-known to us for his informative presentations. He recently went on a Field Guides tour in Thailand, lead by a resident of that country. Bob says that the digital bird shots are high quality – done by digiscoping birdwatcher fanatics. Their guide also sent

him an awesome collection of digiscoping shots taken over a period of time while leading trips. This should be a wonderful trip around Thailand and its fantastic wildlife.

## April 3, 2007

MAS Elections

Following the elections of 2006, the MAS Board determined to separate elections and the annual banquet in future years. So this year's elections will be held indoors with a reduced program schedule. If we have numerous candidates for positions, we will show a short film, Life List. If we have a slate of candidates, we will have a regular program (possibly a scope workshop or a segment from The Life of Birds).

## May 1, 2007

Larry Liese Birding By Ear

We are fortunate to have Larry speak at our banquet! A long-time member of Tucson Audubon, Larry hails from Vermont and is a terrific guide whether in Mexico, Central America, or Arizona. He leads field trips, birding and natural history trips throughout southern Arizona, as well as Belize, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Mata Ortiz and other south of the border spots. Larry started the Dastardly Duos column for Tucson Audubon and teaches a course on birding by ear. He loves sharing his passion for birds with people of all levels and his excitement and enthusiasm are contagious. Come and learn about birding by ear just in time to practice!

NOTE: The May program will be associated with our Annual Banquet. Check our web site, newsletter, or contact a board member for location information.

## Committees/Support

Activist Alert  
Shawn Baur  
602-828-3607

[shawnbaur@hotmail.com](mailto:shawnbaur@hotmail.com)

Arizona Audubon Council Rep  
Herb Fibel

[herbertsfibel@aol.com](mailto:herbertsfibel@aol.com)

Book Store

Field Observations  
Janet Witzeman  
602-840-6089

[jwitzeman@aol.com](mailto:jwitzeman@aol.com)

Hospitality  
David Chorlton  
602-253-5055

Web Page  
Kurt Rademaker  
480.837-2446  
[kurtrad@mexicobirding.com](mailto:kurtrad@mexicobirding.com)

Maricopa Audubon web site  
<http://www.maricopa-audubon.org>

Maricopa Audubon Phone  
480-829-8209

"Man's greatest joy is to teach the love of nature." Anon

## An Investment in the Future

Bequests are an important source of support for the Maricopa Audubon Society. Your chapter has dedicated itself to the protection of the natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

You can invest in the future of our natural world by making a bequest in your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society. Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.

## From the Editor, Deva Burns

Did you add to your state list this past winter? The possibilities have been numerous: Lesser Black-backed Gull, Worm-eating Warbler, Couch's Kingbird, Black-throated Green Warbler, Red-necked Grebe to name a few.

Were you aware of MAS long history of anti-dam activism and education? This issue Bob presents a good history lesson on some of MAS efforts with several Indian tribes over the years in fighting dams and other conservation issues while educating the public. There are a couple of field trip reports that you should find interesting,

also an intriguing article by Tom Gatz, and one by Mitch Heindel. As usual the regular contributors do not disappoint us.

It certainly has been cold these past several weeks—even snow! But the thrashers are singing at the Salome Highway site, Anna's Hummingbirds are showing off their courtship flights, and Great Horned Owls and Costa's Hummingbirds are already nesting. Spring migration is imminent and it's apparent why Arizona is the foremost birding destination in the country—something exciting is always going on regardless of temperature, season or year.



Lesser Black-backed Gull; photographed by Jim Burns in Palo Verde, AZ, December, 2006 with Canon EOS 1D body and Canon 600mm f/4 lens.

The other day I was treated to an early Holiday Season surprise. On my morning walk, which includes a jaunt through a little manmade park with a duck pond, situated behind the multi-story National Bank Building at Dorsey and Southern in Tempe, a sunbeam from a 45 degree early morning sun caught what appeared to be raindrops descending from a particular deciduous tree. Mallards and Rock Pigeons were browsing underneath. I walked past the tree and looked up to see what was going on. The sun accented the gold of perhaps 50 Lesser Goldfinches flitting around with great enthusiasm, attacking the tree in order to sate themselves with its bountiful supply of fresh seeds. The tree literally lit up with the gold of the finches flitting all about. It was the seed which they shook loose, which cascaded down, and gave the appearance that it was drizzling snow beneath the tree. The seed loosened but missed by the Goldfinches enabled the Rock Pigeons and Mallards to share in the tree's bounty, too. One wonders how many people walked past that tree that morning and, failing to look up, missed this colorful spectacle.

Don't knock this little park as a birding hotspot. At one time or other on my jaunts, I've seen Belted Kingfishers, Black-crowned Night Herons, Green Herons, Great Blues, Say's Phoebe, a Coot, Killdeer, Orange-crowned and Yellow-rumped Warblers, and even a female Western Tanager.

Certainly, though, the birding highlight of the Holiday Season for me this year, and this is not to denigrate the two CBCs in which I participated and the one that I was supposed to participate in, but didn't because I was ill, was an exciting bird that I was able to add to my life list.

Cynthia Donald and Pete Moulton came by in mid-January to pick up an Audubon 2007 Calendar and mentioned that after they picked up the calendar they were going "owling". Before they left, daughter Lori and son-in-law Phil arrived on a different mission. Lori has absolutely no interest in birds in any way, shape, or form. Phil, on the other hand, is a Basic Birding Class graduate, has binoculars, a field guide and an all-abiding interest. It was Lori though who asked where they were headed and what they would

be looking for. Cynthia told us that there was a Saw Whet Owl reported in Tempe on Wilson just west of the Maple Ash District, seen already by about 60 people the day before, and they were on their way to check it out. Lori asked if she, Phil, and I could meet them over there. She assented, of course, and gave us the address. There was another birder from Mesa there when we arrived, but she confessed to being an amateur and hadn't found the bird yet. Cynthia arrived, walked down the driveway, told everyone that the property owner had put out the welcome mat for all birders, looked up in a small tree and found in the wink of an owl's eye my family's first Northern Saw Whet Owl, no more than 15 feet over our heads in clear view. I reached my other friend Cynthia, who lives nearby, on her cell phone, and she was able to add this unusual visitor to the Valley to her life list as well.

That's your president's report for this issue. At this writing there is nothing new from National Audubon that has reached my desk regarding the establishment of the new chapter in the Valley.

## Close Call for a Flammulated Owl

Tom Gatz

One of the best things about volunteering at the Desert Botanical Garden is that you never really know what you will experience each time you return. For instance, on October 11, two days before the fall plant sale, while I was sitting on the asphalt parking lot, gingerly attempting to label a tray of spiny and very uncooperative *Euphorbia horrida*, horticulturalist Angelica Elliot came up and asked me if I could respond to a call from a school guide reporting an owl being attacked by a roadrunner on the Wildflower Trail. As an Audubon member, avid birder and recently retired wildlife biologist, I live for this kind of an assignment! Gratefully turning in my tray of partially labeled euphorbias, I grabbed my camera, binoculars and gloves and quickly headed into the Garden.

I located school guide Pamela Keller who had reported the observation to the ranger. She directed me to Beverly Robertson, a Garden visitor from New York. Beverly was in town for the National Hispanic Women's Conference. As many birders do when on business trips to the Valley, she packed her binoculars and bird book and made a point of visiting the Garden in the hope of seeing some interesting desert birds. Well, she saw an interesting bird all right, but it wasn't one of our typical desert species. It was a tiny, adult flammulated owl, a rare visitor from the higher elevation ponderosa pine forest; perhaps from Flagstaff, perhaps from as far away as southern Canada. Later, a quick check of the DBG bird data base on our library computer revealed only 2 previous sightings of this 6 1/2 inch-long owl at the Garden, both about 10 years ago, also in the fall months of September and October. According to the new (2005) National Geographic Society's bird book, this species is "rarely detected during migration."

I'll let Beverly describe her amazing encounter in her own words.

I whirled around to see it [the roadrunner] dart into a low tree and come out with something dark

in its beak. It suddenly spotted me and dropped its prey and backed off slightly, beak still agape. I looked down to see that the dark thing was...some sort of OWL! The little owl spread its wings and faced off with the roadrunner. The roadrunner circled to the left...to the right...back and forth pendulum fashion trying to get an opening. I was standing not 2 feet away watching. As the roadrunner would dart in, I would shuffle my feet in the stones to try and help the little owl. The owl turned toward me and I saw dark eyes beseeching me. I start to flap my arms and shuffle and stamp my feet—carefully staying on the path. The roadrunner pecked at the owl again and again. I knew the instant that I turned my back it would be all over. As luck and the owl gods would have it, a school group approached. As the kids came along, the roadrunner dashed off ahead of them...the owl fluttered off....The guide...immediately picked up her walkie talkie and called... 'come quick...we have an injured owl!'

The owl did not appear able to fly well, and Beverly was concerned it might be injured. When I arrived, I scanned the underbrush and eventually observed the owl on a branch in the back of a large creosote bush. This time it perched absolutely still and vertically upright in its concealing posture in an attempt to appear thinner and to blend in with the branches. As I slowly reached for my camera, it flew off, apparently only temporarily shaken up but none the worse for wear from its close encounter with a still-hungry roadrunner. The flammulated owl was first sighted in the exact same ironwood tree in which an unusually late migrating elf owl was seen just the week before on the Garden bird walk (we need to keep an eye on that tree!)

Beverly was attracted to the Garden knowing



Photo caption: Spreading its wings to appear larger, the flammulated owl is the only North American species of small owl with dark eyes. Its name is from the Latin word flammula for "flame", referring to the red-orange plumage around its facial disks. Photo by Beverly Robertson.

it is great bird habitat. Likewise, the insectivorous flammulated owl, migrating over this ever-expanding megalopolis, keyed in on the Garden for a place to rest and perhaps catch a meal of a moth, beetle or caterpillar before continuing south to its wintering grounds in Central America. An analysis by Dr. William Cook of 18 years of bird observations by DBG birders revealed that, as the Garden's vegetation has grown and matured, and as new areas of habitat were added when the pond was constructed and more seed and insects became available along the new Plants and People and Wildflower trails, the diversity of bird species has increased as well.

Beverly recently sent me this email: "On the way out, I became a member of the Garden.... it serves as host to migrating flammulated owls! A sea of green in an otherwise sprawling city."

As the saying goes: "Build it, and they will come." The DBG, an oasis for birds...and for people.



# Notes & Announcements

**Nominating Committee:** Pursuant to our Bylaws, it is the duty of the president, with the advice and consent of the Board of Directors, to select a Nominating Committee consisting of no less than three non-current Board Members and publish their names and phone numbers in the Cactus Wren-dition prior to the annual Board of Directors elections. This year the Board of Directors elections will take place at the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, April 3, 2007. Any adult member in good standing seeking nomination will have his or her name placed into nomination by the Nominating Committee. If you are interested, call any one of the following members of the Nominating Committee, and let him or her know of your interest. Your name will be placed on the slate, and your candidacy will be announced by the Nominating Committee. All Board positions except Wren-dition Editor are elected by the membership. Our Bylaws also require that nominations be open from the floor at our annual elections. As a request, though, to help keep things simple, please let a Nominating Committee person know in advance of your interest if possible. Please do not nominate someone else unless you have their consent, and know that he or she is a member in good standing of this Chapter.

This year's nominating committee is:

Charles Babbitt, Chairman,  
(602) 840-1772  
David Chorlton, member,  
(602) 253-5055  
Suzanne Steadman, member,  
(480) 966-9483

**2007 MARICOPA AUDUBON BOARD ELECTIONS**-Since the Board Elections in May 2006, there have been several changes in the process. At the membership meeting in December 2006, the membership voted to amend the Bylaws to now state that Board Elections for the upcoming fiscal year will occur in 2007 and henceforth at the April General Membership Meeting rather than at the Annual Banquet Meeting the first Tuesday in May, with installation of the newly elected Board to take place at the Annual Banquet Meeting. It was felt that it would be more democratic to have the election at a regular membership meeting rather than at a Banquet Meeting where advanced reservations are required and where you had to pay a substantial amount in order to attend. While we managed to work it out at our first contested election in 2006, it was a painful and confusing process for everyone involved, particularly for the Nominating Committee and for the Banquet Committee trying to put on an organized

celebration of the year past's activities, a recognition of accomplishments, and the best program of the year. The Nominating Committee's slate will be announced at the April Membership Meeting, so come prepared to vote.

**Hummingbirds-Frequently Asked Questions About Hummingbirds** by Rose Houk. This is a very concise and brief booklet that can answer your basic questions about hummingbirds. It is available from your bookseller or Western National Parks Association at 888-569-7762 or at their webstore at [www.wnpa.org](http://www.wnpa.org). The suggested retail price is \$4.95. You may also contact Derek Gallagher in Tucson at 520-622-1999 or [derek@wnpa.org](mailto:derek@wnpa.org).

**Boyce Thompson Arboretum Bird Walks**-February 3, 11, 17, 25 March 3, 11, 17 and 25 at 8:30 a.m.

**Saturday & Sunday March 17-18 Tres Rios Nature Festival B&M Wildlife Area** Avondale Blvd and the Gila River (just north of PIR). See <http://www.tresriosnaturefestival.com/html/details.html> for details.



**March 30-April 2: Aleutian Goose Festival**, Crescent City, CA-Please see [www.aleutiangoosefestival.org](http://www.aleutiangoosefestival.org) or call Sandy at 707-954-5253 or Goose Nest at 707-465-0888 or 800-908-WING for more information.

**Saturday, March 31 Feathered Friends Festival**-The Gilbert Water Ranch Feathered Friends Festival will be held Saturday, March 31 from 9 am - 2 pm. Over 40 booths will host wildlife exhibitors and educational activities including games and crafts about insects, plants, water, reptiles, birds, and more. There will be food, music, raffle drawings, birding experiences, and tours of the preserve as well. All ages are welcome. Donations are requested for some activities, but admission is free.

**Silent Auction at May banquet:** Do you have any items you would like to donate to the MAS annual silent auction at the May banquet? They don't need to be bird related. Last year we raised over \$700 from items donated by members like you. Please contact Laurie Nessel for information on how to donate. [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com), 480.968.5614  
**Impromptu birdwatching listserv:** Have you

ever been in the mood for a bird outing and checked the field trip listings only to find none coming up? Maricopa Audubon is initiating an impromptu birdwatching listserv. Here's how it works: you send your email address (or phone number) to the field trip chair ([laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com)). These addresses will be sent out to everyone else on the list. Then, a day or two (or more if you know) before you want to go birding, send an email to everyone on the list. (If you are email challenged, call the field trip chair to disseminate your message). State the day you want to go, a meeting time and place for carpooling and a destination. State if you would like to drive or ride with someone else and list your closest intersection. This can also be used to arrange carpools to chase birds. Please, don't arrange trips when there are planned MAS trips, unless you need to bird much closer to the valley.

**Expanded Book Store Selections**-We also need a Book Store Committee chair volunteer-please contact a Board member if you are interested. We now have a full selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike. Maricopa Audubon logo items will include binocular harnesses, tote bags, UV-protection caps, and baseball caps. We will also have bird-themed sandstone coasters and note-cards. Newly-designed t-shirts will also be available. Remember that Friends of Maricopa Audubon members get a 10% discount and that your purchase helps to support our event, education and conservation efforts

**Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)**-Check out their website for events around the state-[www.azwildlife.com](http://www.azwildlife.com).

**Museum of Northern Arizona**-They sponsor Venture trips that explore and discover the Colorado Plateau in the Four Corners area. For more information contact Lisa Lamberson at 928-774-5211 x241 or [llamberson@mna.mus.az.us](mailto:llamberson@mna.mus.az.us).

**Environmental Fund-Green At Work**-Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about checking off "Green" choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include environmental/conservation groups, please contact Solange Whitehead at the Environmental Fund for Arizona:

[efaz@efaz.org](mailto:efaz@efaz.org) or (480) 510-5511.

Donation Wish List-Maricopa Audubon Society is looking for a donation of a laptop computer in order to provide educational presentations to youth groups and classes. To donate please contact any board member.

Membership Information-There are two ways to get on the mailing list in order to receive the Cactus Wren-dition. First, by joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in Maricopa County, generally east of 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, when National Audubon receives your check and membership application, Maricopa Audubon will receive your name and address from National, and will add you to Maricopa Audubon's Wren-dition mailing list, or you can make a check payable to National Audubon Society for \$20.00 and mail it with your National Audubon Society membership application to: Jack Follett, Maricopa Audubon Society's membership chair, 1520 E Secretariat Dr, Tempe, AZ 85284, and he will forward it on to National Audubon. In the latter case, Maricopa Audubon will receive a rebate of your entire \$20.00 National Audubon membership fee the first year. Secondly, by becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and will not receive the Audubon magazine, or any of the "benefits" of National Audubon membership but you will receive one year of the Cactus Wren-dition. "Friends" contribution categories in the form of a check made payable to Maricopa Audubon Society, and mailed to Mark Horlings, Maricopa Audubon Society's membership chair 1520 E Secretariat Dr, Tempe, AZ 85284. The categories are—Anna's-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk\*-\$1,000-\$9,999; and California Condor\*-\$10,000+\*. \*These levels include a signed, framed photograph by Jim Burns of your designated raptor. All "Friends" members receive various discounts. If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the Cactus Wren-dition is to become a "Friend" of Maricopa Audubon Society.

Credit Card- The American Birding Association has negotiated an agreement with US Bank to provide ABA members a distinctive US BANK VISA Card. Using your card will not only show your connection to ABA and birding but also, at no additional cost to you, provide a contribution to ABA. If interested, contact [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org). I think Audubon should offer something like this!

The Dovetail Directory

([www.dovetailbirding.com](http://www.dovetailbirding.com)): The Directory is an online catalogue of world birding tours, and our goal is to help birders locate that special birding tour, to any of 85 countries around the world. This is a free service. There are no hidden costs or surcharges. Tours are offered at the operators price. In addition to tours, the Directory also carries a comprehensive inventory of birding-related books. For your further convenience we maintain a North American, toll-free number (877) 881-1145, and someone will always happy to take your call.

Shade-grown coffee: If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit [www.toucanetcoffee.com](http://www.toucanetcoffee.com) for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is [www.cafebritt.com](http://www.cafebritt.com).

More birding and nature festivals. [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org). and [www.birdinghotspot.com](http://www.birdinghotspot.com).

Audubon Adventures: Give the gift of discovery and share your love of the environment. The program is designated for students in grades 4-6. Introduce an entire classroom (up to 32 students) to the wonders of nature for just \$38.50 (plus shipping charges). You can select your favorite school or let Audubon do it for you. Each packet contains the following: 1. The Nature of Spiders. This is an outstanding brochure that distinguishes between spiders and insects, describes spiders prey, identifies the various parts of the spider body, and an interesting section on the differences between "Hunters and Trappers." Also included in this full color newsletter are sections entitled-"Along Came a Spider," "Friends, Not Foes," "Nominate a State Spider," and finally a true-false quiz on "The Truth about Spiders."

2. Birds of Prey: Hunters of the Air. This full color tabloid style news journal covers RAPTORS-i.e., hawks, falcons, eagles, and owls. One section is devoted to the subject of "The Hunter and the Hunted" and is a match-up exercise to

choose the correct raptor to the prey animal. Other subject matters are: "Are Bald Eagles really Bald?," "The Truth about Raptors" (a true-false test about the presented subject matter), "Whats your Ecological Address?" (where to find raptors), and finally "Raptor Rescue" (injured raptors programs).

3. Real Life Dragons and Damsels This is an outstanding full color pictorial of the life of "Dragonflies and Damselflies at Home"-and the differences between these two insects. Interesting sub sections include-"Habitat Health Check-Up," "Eyes on the Dragonflies," "Dragons, Damsels, and You" (Living together) and finally a quiz entitled, "What's your Ecological Address?" These 3 above Adventures are the best I have seen. They are all great, and offer our kids wonderful educational opportunities. There is also a chart/poster included with each kit, that gets the kids involved in schoolyard/home projects and nature. Each classroom KIT contains materials for 32 students. And, contained therein is a teachers & students 64 page guide/classroom resource manual, as well. Lastly, as a FREE BONUS each kit recipient will receive a one year subscription to Audubon Magazine, an affiliation with the local MAS Chapter, and an official certificate of participation.

If you have a nominee (teacher and school), please have them get in touch with Doug Green @ my e-mail address of: [azbotman@yahoo.com](mailto:azbotman@yahoo.com) or call me @ 480-998-5638.

We will need the following information on all potential teacher candidates.

A.) School name and street address, city, zip code.  
B.) Teachers full name & email address.  
C.) Grades Taught-3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, etc.  
I'm really impressed with this school years' (2006-07) program. If more information is needed than shown above--try [www.audubon.org/educate/aa](http://www.audubon.org/educate/aa) to see Audubon Adventures on line.

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts—For information, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or mail to: [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com)

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your submissions to the Editor—Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those to me directly. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

# Patricia "Patty" Tax

Our beloved Maricopa Audubon Membership chairman from May 1998 to Spring , 2004, Patty Tax, passed away on October 12, 2006.

Patty succeeded Liz Hatcher at that post. She put the membership records on computer disk for the first time, and helped create the separate membership category of "Friends of Maricopa Audubon", which required maintaining a completely different set of records.

Patty asked to be excused from attending evening board meetings, because, except towards the end of her tenure, she continued to work full time for the City of Phoenix, and knowing the substantial amount of time required to be put in by the membership chair to fulfill her duties, the board had no problem granting her request.

Stan and Patty frequently turned up unannounced at Arizona Audubon Council Meetings around the state, and were a gratifying addition to the proceedings. Stan and Patty also marched in at least one Orme Dam Days Parade at the Fort McDowell Indian Community, and both were avid environmentalists. They became involved in Audubon initially through Maricopa Audubon's Basic Birding Class. Patty always made herself available to answer any and all membership questions and problems.

Patty was only 58 when she passed away in October. She leaves behind her devoted husband Stan, a son, Chis, his wife, Christine, and one granddaughter, Kate.

Always a dear, sweet, and caring person, she will be missed for a very long time.

## Maricopa Audubon Society

### ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

SHALIMAR GOLF CLUB  
2032 East Golf Avenue, Tempe, AZ  
Tuesday, May 1, 2006

The Maricopa Audubon Society will hold its Annual Meeting and Banquet on Tuesday, May 1, 2006 at Shalimar Golf Club, located at 2032 East Golf Avenue in Tempe, Arizona 85282. This is one block north of Southern Avenue, midway between McClintock Drive and Price Road. You can access Shalimar from Southern Avenue by turning north on either Country Club Way or Fairfield Drive. There is a sign for Shalimar at the intersection of Southern Avenue and Fairfield Drive. If you turn on Country Club Way, there is a sign for Shalimar at their back parking lot.

There will be a no-host bar starting at 6:00 p.m. We will have a raffle and silent auction of exceptional items, so plan to arrive early and peruse the raffle and auction tables. Tickets for the raffle will be available at the door.

Our guest speaker this year is Larry Liese, who will give a program on "Birding by Ear" and we are fortunate to have him speak at our banquet! A long-time member of Tucson Audubon, Larry hails from Vermont and is a terrific guide whether in Mexico, Central America, or Arizona. He leads field trips, birding and natural history trips throughout southern Arizona, as well as Belize, Chihuahua, Jalisco, Mata Ortiz and other south of the border spots. Larry started the Dastardly Duos column for Tucson Audubon and teaches a course on birding by ear. He loves sharing his passion for birds with people of all levels and his excitement and enthusiasm are contagious. Come and learn about birding by ear just in time to practice!

The buffet dinner begins at 7:00 p.m. and reservations are required. We will have a buffet menu with salads, bread, vegetable selections, main course selections, beverages and desserts. The cost is \$25.00 (\$22.50 for "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" members). Please contact Cynthia Donald at [planres@earthlink.net](mailto:planres@earthlink.net) or 480-283-4515 or Jack Follett at [JackFollett@msn.com](mailto:JackFollett@msn.com) or 602-319-3071 to make a reservation. Please indicate the number of people in your party, whether or not you are a "Friends" member and provide an email and phone number in case we need to contact you. Payment is made at the door and can be either cash or check. Dress is casual. We look forward to seeing you at the banquet!



# Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

photo quiz

## THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

I've had some requests recently for an easier quiz. Here it is, with three large, easy-to-spot species, which are seen more regularly around the Valley in the winter than at any other season.



A) Good photo, easy bird



B) Good photo, easy bird



C) Good photo, difficult bird

All Photos by Jim Burns

# Scott's Oriole

Jim Burns

Scott's Oriole, despite its spectacular contrast of lemon yellow and solid black, is not an easy bird to find. It is uncommon and it does not flock up. Its admirers, and those who wish to be, are well advised to learn its unique and beautiful whistled song which will alert them to its presence before it is seen.

Both Sibley (*The Sibley Guide To Birds*) and Kaufmann (*Lives Of North American Birds*) comment that this song of *Icterus parisorum* calls to mind that of Western Meadowlark, but I have an old friend with a more apt description. He says hearing Scott's always suggests to him a small boy learning how to whistle--the notes are low but clear, slightly ascending but attenuated, and the whole song is rather tentative as if the singer is a little unsure of the proper phrasing and not at all sure he wants to have anyone hear him.

North of our border with Mexico, Scott's breeds from southern California across much of Nevada and Utah south through Arizona, the southwestern half of New Mexico, and southwestern Texas with northern extensions into extreme southeastern Idaho, southwestern Wyoming, and western Colorado. South of the border it breeds through Baja and central Mexico, and it winters to southern Baja and southern Mexico.

Throughout its range this is an oriole of arid yucca grasslands, low oak foothills, and pine/oak woodlands in

desert mountains, though it avoids low deserts. In California, particularly, it favors Joshua tree forests and palm oases. It is a migrant north of the border, though it can be found overwintering in the southeastern Arizona hotspots, especially around private feeding stations.

Scott's is an early migrant both ways, arriving in Arizona's Sky Islands in mid-March and departing by mid-August.

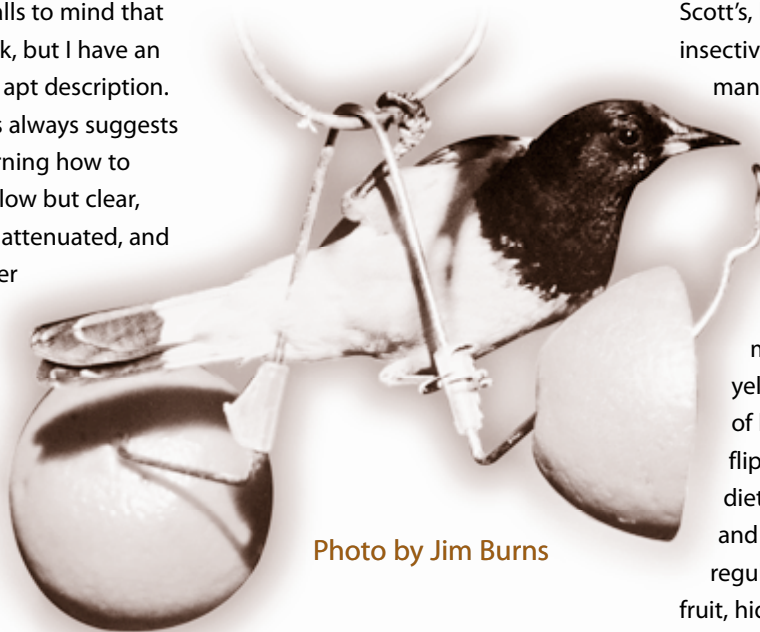


Photo by Jim Burns

Serendipitously for birders, in Arizona it is most common in the southeast and is regularly encountered in many of the locations frequented by those looking for our other special species--Molino Basin on the Catalina Highway, along the highway east of Sonoita, along the highway west of Chiricahua National Monument, and in Ash, Madera, Miller, and Cave Creek Canyons in the Sky Islands.

Though Scott's build a hanging nest similar to that of other orioles, theirs are not as deep and thus not

as conspicuous as those of their congeners. In the Sky Islands these nests, woven by the female only, using yucca fibers and long grasses, are often well hidden high among the leaves of streamside sycamores and cottonwoods. In drier habitats these nests may often be found in mistletoe clumps on ironwood and palo verde. Two to four eggs are laid and sometimes two broods are produced in a season.

Scott's, like other orioles, are insectivorous and frugivorous. All manner of insects are plucked from the foliage as Scott's meticulously explore sections of trees at a time with a feeding style rather like the tanagers, climbing and fly-hopping, their presence made known only by a flash of yellow and black as a dense clump of leaves is unweighted and they flip to the next bough or tree. The diet includes fruits and berries and nectar from flowers. They will regularly investigate cactus for its fruit, hidden bugs, and, presumably, for pollen as well. At feeding stations, in addition to hanging on the feeders for sugar water, Scotts will readily come to grape jelly, sliced oranges and suet. The accompanying photograph was taken at an orange feeder in Ash Canyon in May, 2003.

Scott's species name, *parisorum*, honors the Paris brothers, two Frenchmen who pioneered bird collecting in Mexico in the nineteenth century, and the common name, Scott's, honors General Winfield Scott of the War of 1812 and Mexican War fame. It is unclear whether or not



Scott had any personal relationship with his eponymous oriole, but it's a good match, this showy, striking icterid and the vain and punctilious war hero aka "old fuss and feathers."

It is unlikely a male Scott's would be mistaken for any other oriole, but the female is a drab olive green bird with dark streaking on the upper

back. Note the wingbars and the somewhat brighter shade of yellow on the lower belly. Female Hoodeds, by comparison, are brighter birds overall, gray over yellow without the green tones, female Orchard Orioles are much smaller birds, scarcely larger than warblers, and female Bullock's are yellow-orange on the face and breast with gray "underpants."

Scott's Oriole seems to be one of those Arizona specialties that birders never prioritize, assuming sooner or later they'll come across one somewhere in their Arizona travels. When they see a male it's always a special moment, eye candy with a sweet song, just uncommon enough to be a pleasant surprise even though the species is fully expected.

## A Perfect 10

Mitch Heindel From Birdchat listserv

Jan. 1, 2007 Sabinal River Valley, ca. 4 mi. N. of Utopia, TX, Bandera Co.. "Pair-bond" display flight of Chihuahuan Raven.

At a stop on our unofficial annual bird count, during which we were looking for Chihuahuan Raven, Kathy said "Don't I hear Raven?" Then I heard them. They were straight up, about 500' overhead. After a few calls the performance began. First gigantic 150'+ diameter ferris wheel loops. The pair moved very close and in perfect tandem, one bird above the other, as if you had double vision, or one was a shadow of the other, they did giant 360degree loops. Then they would change position, with one going behind the other, its bill touching the front birds' tail and do another giant loop. Then back to a loop with one shadowing the other, so close they appeared to be touching, breast to back. Occasionally after a loop one would do a spiral 360 barrel roll with wings fully extended, in

straight line flight, so fast you'd think it's feathers would fall out. Then another giant loop. The most spectacular was when they joined wingtips, side by side, and did a giant slow motion 360, flying as one twin-fuselaged bird. After this unbelievable loop, the barrel-roller did three wing-extended rolls faster than a fighter jet could ever do. Then they went to the dive part of a loop, and one bird turned upside-down, closing its wings over its back. The other moved into position directly over it, also closing wings over its back. In a full stoop, as the upper bird got very near the upside-down one, the upside-down bird lifted its close fisted feet up and the upper bird dropped its feet down and they tapped feet. More barrel rolls. A giant ferris wheel loop. Then another paired stoop, one bird

turning upside-down, and this time they tapped their fisted feet three times before they broke out of the dive just 150' overhead. More barrel-rolls and a few more giant loops in the various positions, and then they called for

the first time since the beginning of the flight as they turned and soared away across the valley. The whole flight lasted about 4 minutes, with nary a croak during the performance. My wife said "so that's where they got figure

skating from". It was a perfect 10. All I could do the whole time was babble mostly unprintable stuff, it was so over the top, and I've been watching birds fly for 50 years. It was, to me, what birding is all about, watching birds do the amazing things they do, and seeing the common bird, in an uncommon way.



# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

Attention Field Trip Enthusiasts: Please check our website for changes and additions to the field trip schedule <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/calendar.htm>. Also check the Notes and Announcements for the exciting new program set up by Laurie Nessel—an impromptu birding list!

The following field trips are sponsored by the Maricopa Audubon Society who have an organized program of trips throughout the year. They are open to the public and are free and include all skill levels. All the trips are Difficulty Level 1 unless noted otherwise.

## CAR POOLING:

Maricopa Audubon strongly encourages carpooling on field trips. Please make every effort to organize your own carpool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places; and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 5 to 10 cents per mile

## LEGEND:

Limit: Maximum number of participants per field trip. Please call early to make your reservations.

Difficulty Levels 1 through 5: 1 equals very low level of exertion, short walking distances, considerable birding from vehicle and possibly multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails.

## REMINDERS:

- Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes
- Bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water
- Avoid wearing bright colors
- Bring your binoculars
- Don't forget to have FUN!!!

Attention Field Trip Leaders! If you have a field trip scheduled that is not listed, please contact the Field Trip chair, Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614 or [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com)

## Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

### Saturday, February 10

Base & Meridian Wildlife Area- Gila River

Join us for a visit to an outstanding riparian habitat area almost in your backyard! The Base and Meridian Wildlife Area at Avondale Blvd. and the Gila River is the new host location for the Tres Rios Nature Festival. An accessible mix of open water, marsh and riparian woodland habitats makes this a great location for waterfowl, waders, osprey, kingfishers, and other fish-eating birds. Visit the top of "Monument Hill", the location where the Township and Range mapping system for all of Arizona has its zero-zero coordinate location. We often see black vultures here. Help us preview the local birds for the nature festival buildup! Walking difficulty varies from easy to rather difficult depending on extent of your adventurous spirit. Meet at the Fry's Parking Lot at Avondale Blvd. and Buckeye Rd. (MC85) at 7:00 am. Look for the White GMC Yukon with Arizona Game and Fish emblem on the door. Limit 12. Difficulty 2. A scope is helpful.

Leader: Tom Hildebrandt, (480) 324.3552, [thildebrandt@azgfd.gov](mailto:thildebrandt@azgfd.gov) (email preferred) for reservations

### Saturday, February 24

Cottonwood. We will visit sites near Cottonwood, including Peck's Lake, Tuzigoot national Monument and Tavaschi Marsh. We will meet in the AM in northern Phoenix and carpool to Cottonwood. Expect to see a variety of residents and waterfowl including Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Harrier, Canada Goose, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet. Bring lunch and scope. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 2

Leader: Richard Kaiser (602) 276.3312 or [Rkaiserinaz@aol.com](mailto:Rkaiserinaz@aol.com) for reservations.

### Wednesday, March 14 (tentative date depending on spring rains)

Picacho Peak wildflowers and plants. This trip will combine looking at birds, wildflowers, and desert shrubs. Wildflowers may be in short supply depending on the abundance of winter

rainfall. Plant life dictates what bird species will be found in an area. These relationships and other aspects of avian natural history will be our primary topics as we search for desert birds. Meet at the REI parking lot at SW corner of Southern & Priest in Tempe for prompt departure at 6 AM. Bring lunch, water and carpool money. Contact leader for reservations or additional information. Difficulty: 1

Leader: Robert Ohmart, ASU Dept. Applied Biological Sciences (Retired), for reservations 480.831.5564

### Saturday, March 17

Flagstaff Lakes. On this field trip we will visit the lakes around Flagstaff looking for waterfowl and Bald Eagles. We also hope to find Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finches and Pinyon Jays. We will meet at Denny's Restaurant at the intersection of I-40 and I-17 at 8:00AM. Bring a lunch, water, snacks and a scope will be very helpful. Difficulty 1  
Leader: Charles Babbitt, (602) 840.1772 or [cjbabbitt@cox.net](mailto:cjbabbitt@cox.net) for reservations

### Saturday, March 24

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Butterflies and Invertebrates. Join Fred Stewart as we explore the Arboretum for Lepidoptera and other invertebrates along with spring migrants. Learn about the migration patterns of Arizona's Monarchs from BTA Education Coordinator, Chris Kline, who is tracking tagged Monarchs. Limit 15, Difficulty 2  
Leader: Fred Stewart, (480) 898.7239 or [fspescador@yahoo.com](mailto:fspescador@yahoo.com) for reservations and information.

### Friday, March 30th

Sonoita Creek Natural Area. We will hike both riparian (3,750') and upland areas of the newly opened 5,000-acre site adjacent to Patagonia Lake State Park. More than 130 species of butterflies and 275 species of birds have been documented there. To control human impact and maintain a wilderness experience, only a limited number of permits are granted daily. Park Ranger Bill Adler will lead us on a 6 mile loop trail to look for spring migrants and residents including Gray Hawk, Common Black Hawk, tanagers, warblers and grassland species. Botanist may want to reserve time to peruse the herbarium in

# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

the Visitors Center, open 7AM-5PM daily. Meet 8:00 at the Visitors Center. Bring snacks, water, lunch, hat, scope. Return to trailhead mid-afternoon. Camping available at Patagonia Lake State Park. Park entry fee is \$7/carload. Limit 8. Difficulty 2, easy but long hiking. Leader: Park Ranger Bill Adler. Reservations (required): Laurie Nessel, [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com), 480.968.5614

## Wednesday, April 18

Birds and Butterflies "Butterfly Canyon" and Seven Springs. An area much overlooked by birders and butterflies alike, we will investigate the effect that the Cave Creek Complex fire of 2005 had on this transition zone. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the junction of Carefree Highway and the road to Bartlett Dam. We will check for returning migrants and early butterflies. Bring a lunch and water. A field guide to butterflies would be helpful. Limit 15. Difficulty 1. Leader: Janet Witzeman, (602) 840.6089 for reservations.

## Saturday, April 21

Oak Flat Campground & Haunted Canyon, Endangered Tonto National Forest Public Lands. Celebrate Earth Day visiting two special birding spots in danger of transforming into copper mines. Early morning stop to Oak Flat Campground for a quick view of the 4100' elevation chaparral habitat where Crissal Thrasher was seen. Continue on to Haunted Canyon for a 3-mile round trip hike to a 95% forest canopy including One-seed juniper and Arizona alder. We will look for spring migrants at this 3500' elevation riparian habitat. Bring lunch and water. Limit 15. Difficulty 3. Leader: Laurie Nessel, (480) 968.5614 or Laurie [Nessel@hotmail.com](mailto:Nessel@hotmail.com) for reservations and information.

## Wednesday, May 2

Mt. Ord. Enjoy a tour as we travel from the foothill scrub looking for the watch-listed Gray Vireo and Black-chinned Sparrow in the lower scrub, Painted Redstart, Hairy Woodpecker, Olive Warbler and other warbler species as we climb to near 7128'. Bring lunch snacks. Limit 15. Difficulty 2 for some

steep walking at the peak. Leader: Russ Widner, (480) 595.2977 or [rwidner@earthlink.net](mailto:rwidner@earthlink.net) for reservations.

## Tuesday, May 15

Patagonia to Madera Canyon. We leave for S.E. AZ at 4 a.m. from the S.E. end of the Tempe Library (S.W. Southern and Rural) parking lot on Tuesday morning. Or, meet near the public restrooms in the central park of Patagonia near 4th Ave. and Hwy. 82 about 6:15 a.m. In Patagonia, we will first visit the Pattons' hummingbird feeders for several species, including Violet-crowned Hummingbird. Then we will drive south along the gravel road that runs on the west side of Sonoita Creek and look for Thick-billed Kingbirds, Gray Hawks, Northern Beardless Tyrannulets, and perhaps an early-arriving Varied Bunting. We will stop at the picnic area several miles south of Patagonia and check for migrants and nesting species there, such as Summer Tanager, Black Vulture and Blue Grosbeak. Lunch should find us at Kino Springs where a very early Tropical Kingbird is possible along with Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, more Gray hawks, and lingering waterfowl. In the heat of the early afternoon we will drive north on I-19 to the Continental turnoff and up to Madera Canyon. Along the way we will check for grassland-savanna species, such as Rufous-winged Sparrow. At the Santa Rita Lodge feeders we will peruse the jays, woodpeckers, finches and hummingbirds. Then with a short half-hour hike from the upper parking lot, we will look for forest warblers, vireos and finches, with a hopeful eye for an early Elegant Trogon, Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher or Greater Pewee. Hopefully we will find 120 species or so before we finally arrive back at Tempe about 6 pm. Limit: 4 cars. Difficulty 1, some short hiking.

Leader: Dr. David Pearson, Conservation Biology Professor, ASU. Reservations: Laurie Nessel, [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com), 480.968.5614

## Wednesday, May 16

Slate Creek Divide. Some of the specialties of that area are breeding Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow,

Scott's Oriole in the juniper area and Red-breasted Nuthatch, Virginia's Warbler and Red-faced Warbler higher up in the pines. We will meet at the Denny's parking lot on the south side of Shea Blvd. just west of the Beeline Highway (Rt. 87) at 6:30 A.M. Bring a lunch and water. Difficulty 2 for some steep walking.

Leader: Janet Witzeman (602) 840.6089 for reservations.

## Saturday, May 26 & Sunday, May 27

Sierra Vista Canyons & Gray Hawk Ranch. Two terrific sites near Sierra Vista, each trip led by Sandy Anderson, director and founder of Gray Hawk Nature Center. Sandy has an exquisite ear, and birders working on identification through calls and song can learn a lot. We will meet at 8:00 a.m. Saturday and bird the canyons of the Huachuca Mountains, with short hikes into the higher regions if rare visitors are reported. Expect some time in Garden, Miller and Ash Canyons, and some in the grasslands. Daytime temperatures will most likely be in the high 80's. Bring a lunch, water, and a hat. On Sunday, we will meet at 6:30 at the Gray Hawk Nature Center, on the banks of the San Pedro. A summer trip in 2002 saw four species of buntings. We will break up in the early afternoon for return to Phoenix. Call Laurie Nessel for reservations and information. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 3.

Leader: Sandy Anderson, [sandy@grayhawknaturecenter.org](mailto:sandy@grayhawknaturecenter.org). Reservations: Laurie Nessel, [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com), 480.968. 5614

## Sat. June 16

Flagstaff/San Francisco Peaks. Leader Charles Babbitt, more info to follow....

Continuing:

Third Saturdays: Family Bird Walks at the Gilbert Water Ranch sponsored by Friends of Audubon Arizona, 8AM-12AM

Mondays: Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens, free with admission to the garden.



# MAS Defends Cultural & Environmental Education

Bob Witzeman

The wonder is that we can see these trees and not wonder more.  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Each year since the liberation of the Ft. McDowell Yavapai tribe from inundation of their reservation by Orme Dam (Oct. 1981), MAS has been invited to participate in their annual parade celebrating the demise of that dam. Maricopa Audubon is greatly honored that the tribe places us each year just behind their color guard at the head of the parade. Indian tribes from throughout Arizona march in this important cultural victory celebration.

Thanks to decades of anti-dam activism by conservationists here and nationally, most of the proposed Central Arizona Project dams were stopped. We at MAS have been grateful that the National Audubon Society and other national conservation organizations participated directly in our chapter's lawsuits and activism in that effort.

The Gila River Indian Community nine years ago requested the assistance of the Maricopa Audubon Society in that tribe's proposed Christmas Count. They said its purpose was to educate their youth and adults of their tribe's wildlife heritage.

The Gila River Tribe had learned from the nearby Ft. McDowell Yavapai Tribe that Maricopa Audubon had fought for years alongside the Ft. McDowell people in the battle to stop construction of the federal dam (Orme Dam)

that would have inundated their tribal land.

The Gila River Indian Community also noted that the Ft. McDowell Tribe has allowed MAS to conduct major portions of its annual Christmas Count on Ft. McDowell land. With this in mind, the Gila River Tribe asked MAS to inform their youth and tribal members about the birds on their reservation. They also proposed to use the count to assess the environmental health of their lands.

The tribe purchased loaner binoculars for each of their youth and adult participants. They also present each tribal participant with a field guide. After nine years of working together, both Maricopa Audubon and the Tribe agree that this has been a valuable educational vehicle for their youth and parents. We at MAS are pleased that Sonoran Audubon Society members have also in recent years been invited to join this effort.

The Gila River tribal member in charge of the count is Charles Enos. Mr. Enos has been enrolled in the Basic Birding classes taught by Maricopa Audubon member, and current president, Herb Fibel. Those classes are sponsored by the Tempe Parks and Recreation Department and MAS.

Herb's Basic Birding classes, which Herb has taught since 1989, have graduated hundreds of birders in the Phoenix metropolitan area.

One noteworthy incident in our chapter's environmental education activities with Native Americans took place some years ago. A MAS education committee member transported our chapter's collection of educational nature materials, bird nests, feathers, wings, owl pellets, etc. to members of a nearby Indian reservation. Our chapter's environmental education committee at that time did not realize that many Native Americans consider owls harbingers of bad news, death, etc. While that well intended MAS person displayed an owl wing and proceeded to explain how owl feathers were constructed to dampen flight sound to catch prey, she abruptly lost rapport with her audience. That was the last time we took owl parts to our chapter's educational sessions on reservations without prior consultation.

Some Maricopa Audubon Society Board and chapter members, following recent San Carlos Apache tribal elections, had the honor of receiving invitations to the tribe's inauguration of their newly elected tribal officers. MAS and NAS have had the privilege of working with both San Carlos and White Mountain Apache Tribal members since 1989 on cultural and environmental issues of common interest.

It has been a shared effort to protect Dził Nchaa Si An.. Mt Graham is a sacred mountain of both the San Carlos and White Mountain Apache. They are



Photo caption: Right to left: MAS President Herb Fibel, Frank Welsh, Director, Citizens Concerned About the Project (CCAP), Scott Burge, past MAS President, Lee Burge, past MAS Newsletter Editor, Charles Gilbert, Arizona Archeological Society, Barbara Daniels, Tom Daniels (past MAS Conservation Chair, past MAS Publicity Chair, Carolina Butler, Chair, Committee to Save Ft. McDowell. These are a few of the many MAS and community members who worked in the decades-long efforts to stop Orme Dam and other federal dams on Arizona's Salt, Verde, Gila, and San Pedro Rivers.

opposed to that desecration and destruction by the University of Arizona's Mt. Graham telescopes. Those telescopes piecemeal a tiny, vulnerable boreal forest at the summit of that "sky island" massif, home to the extremely endangered Mt. Graham Red Squirrel.

The San Carlos Apache Tribal Council and White Mountain Apache Tribal Council last summer passed resolutions opposing the desecration/destruction of the Oak Flat, Devil's Canyon, and Apache Leap cultural and environmental treasures by the proposed Resolution Copper Company congressional land exchange legislation. Both tribes have held to their convictions despite thousands of dollars

in educational and incentive programs proffered to them by the mining company over the past many months.

The Apache are aware that other conservation organizations like the Sierra Club, the Arizona Wildlife Federation, the Maricopa and Tucson Audubon Societies are on record opposing this gigantic mining project. They have expressed concern about its potential impacts upon the area's groundwater aquifers, wetlands, air, land, streams, springs, endangered species, and especially its harms to culturally significant and sacred places.

Apaches have asked us: Why does the National Audubon Society so eagerly take the

mining company's money, and why do they not care about the land and people which will be harmed by the mine? We have told them that neither Audubon Arizona nor the National Audubon Society asked for the views or input of the geographically proximate Maricopa and Tucson Audubon chapters. Unlike the economically challenged Apache, AA and NAS eagerly accepted the mining company's tens of thousands of dollars in various proffered gratuities.





# Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, &  
NOVEMBER 2006

A Common Loon was found on Fountain Hills Lake again Oct. 14 until Oct. 19 (JAln,KR); one was also present there about the same time a year ago. A Horned Grebe (a rare transient and winter visitor) was discovered at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Nov. 24 and remained into December (TC et al.).

More than usual numbers of Am. White Pelicans were reported in several places: one at Granite Reef Dam Oct. 8 (SG), between 17 and 64 at the Gilbert Rd. pond south of Ocotillo Oct. 14 – Nov. 23 (CF,DPe), between 150 and 70 at Painted Rock Dam Oct. 14 – 28 (BG,CB,SS), 100 at Tres Rios Nov. 18 (RWz,ML et al.), nine at the Lower River Rd. ponds Nov. 24 (TC), and two at 91<sup>st</sup> Ave. and the Salt River Nov. 26 (TC,DPO). One Brown Pelican remained at a pond in Tempe until Sept. 14 (PD).

The pair of Little Blue Herons (at Rio Salado since late May) remained until Sept. 2 (TGs). A large number of 140 Cattle Egrets were counted s. of Narramore Rd., s. of Palo Verde Nov. 24 (TC). A very large group of 1000 White-faced Ibis were observed between Avondale and Arlington Sept. 2 (TC,MV); about 300 were counted at Tres Rios Nov. 18 (RWz,ML et al.). A Roseate Spoonbill, a casual visitor, was observed flying over Tres Rios Sept. 11 (HD,RH).

Six Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were counted at the Gilbert Rd. pond s. of Ocotillo Oct. 26 (DPe). A Black-bellied Whistling-Duck and a Fulvous Whistling-Duck were present all fall into December at Chaparral Park pond in Scottsdale (RM,PD,MM et al.). The Fulvous Whistling-Duck was

probably the same individual that was discovered at ponds in Scottsdale a year ago, and may not have left the area, as local residents reported seeing it there for two years.

Thirteen Greater White-fronted Geese, counted w. of Estrella Parkway Sept. 2 (TC,MV), was an unusual high number for a species that is usually considered uncommon and in small numbers in the county. Four Greater White-fronted Geese were found at the Lower River Rd. ponds Sept. 13 (HD). Individual Ross's Geese were reported at the Lower River Rd. ponds Nov. 13 (KE) and at Chaparral Park pond Nov. 23 at least into December (RM,MM,DPO). There were at least three Lesser Canada Geese seen with a flock of regular Canada Geese at McCormick Ranch Nov. 25 (TC). A Cackling Goose was discovered at Estrella Mountain Ranch clubhouse pond Oct. 30 (JJa) and remained into December (m.ob.).

A male Wood Duck was observed at the Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR) Oct. 8 at least to Nov. 17 (LL,PD,SG,MM,JC) and four were reported there Oct. 15 (MM). A female Wood Duck was observed at Eldorado Park ponds Nov. 25 (TC) and five were counted at the Cobble Ponds Nov. 26 (TC,DPO). An adult male Eurasian Wigeon was found at GWR Oct. 24 (DPe), but the species was not detected at ponds in Scottsdale where the species has wintered in the past. "Mexican" Mallards continued to be seen at Rio Salado during the period (TGs,TB) and up to six were observed at the GWR during the fall (MM). A pair of Blue-winged Teal were observed at the GWR Nov. 21 (MS) and more than 35, found along the Salt River between 91<sup>st</sup> Ave. and 107<sup>th</sup> Ave., Nov. 26, was a large number for so late in the season

(TC,DPO); the species is unusually considered rare in the county after mid-November.

A female Common Goldeneye (an uncommon winter visitor in the county) was found at Fountain Hills Lake Nov. 24 (MM). At least five pairs of Hooded Mergansers were reported at the Scottsdale Pavilions ponds Nov. 25 – 28 (TC,PD,JHa). Three early Com. Mergansers were observed at Fountain Hills Lake Oct. 6 (KR); the species is not usually recorded in the county before the first of November. A Red-breasted Merganser (an uncommon winter visitor) was found at the Lower River Rd. ponds Nov. 13 (KE) and remained at least into December (m.ob.).

One of the Red-shouldered Hawks, residing in Wickenburg, was seen there Oct. 14 (MW). Clapper Rails were heard calling along the Gila River at Arlington Sept. 23 (PD) and Oct. 6 (BG), and in the marshy area along Sisson Rd. near Painted Rock Dam Sept. 23 (PD). Twenty-seven Sandhill Cranes (irregular rare winter visitors) were counted w. of Arlington Nov. 24 (TC) and six were reported near Gillespie Dam Nov. 24 (CC).

Two Black-bellied Plovers were observed at Paloma Ranch Sept. 29 (BG). A Semipalmated Plover was seen at the GWR on the late date of Nov. 16 (MM); the species is seldom recorded after the end of October. Two juvenile Killdeer were brought to the East Valley Wildlife Center Oct. 22, indicating a late nesting for that species (PH).

Three Lesser Yellowlegs were reported at the GWR Nov. 3 (JJa) and one was seen at a pond n.e. of Tres Rios Nov. 26 (TC,DPO); the species is rarely recorded after



the end of October. Ten Solitary Sandpipers, seen in the Arlington Valley Sept. 4 (BG), was a large number for this uncommon transient. Individual Solitary Sandpipers were also observed at Fountain Hills Aug. 21 (KR), at Hunter's Pond Sept. 2 (TC,MV), and at the GWR Sept. 14 to Oct. 8 (MM,PD). Individual Semipalmated Sandpipers (uncommon transients) were found at Hunter's Pond Sept. 3 (CB) and at the nearby El Mirage Pond Sept. 5 (MW), and may have represented the same individual. Two late Western Sandpipers were seen along the Salt River at 91<sup>st</sup> Ave., Nov. 5 (TC). A Stilt Sandpiper was observed at Hunter's Pond Sept. 3 – 4 (CB,BG). A Short-billed Dowitcher was found at the GWR Oct. 13 (MM).

Two juvenile Sabine's Gulls (rare fall transients) were observed at the Lower River Rd. ponds Oct. 6 – 8 (BG,DPe,EL,TC) and one was seen at the GWR Oct. 7 (RD). Two late White-winged Doves were reported at 91<sup>st</sup> Ave. and Broadway Oct. 31 (JJa) and one was seen in a Tempe yard Nov. 6 (HF).

A Flammulated Owl (a casual fall transient at lower elevations) was seen being attacked by a Roadrunner at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) Oct. 11 (TGz). A late Elf Owl, found at the DBG Oct. 2-3 (AT,TGz), provided only the fourth October record for Maricopa County.

An Acorn Woodpecker (an irregular fall wanderer to the lowlands) was seen at the DBG Oct. 27 (JR). A female Williamson's Sapsucker (rare in the lowlands) was found at Morgan City Wash (MCW), s. of Lake Pleasant Oct. 15 (TC).

An Olive-sided Flycatcher, up to ten Willow Flycatchers, several calling

Pacific-slope Flycatchers, and a calling male Cordilleran Flycatcher were seen at MCW Sept. 4 (TC). Two late Willow Flycatchers were reported at MCW Oct. 8 (TC). A Hammond's Flycatcher was observed at Rio Salado Sept. 9 (TGs) and a Dusky Flycatcher was found at the Tres Rios Hayfield Site Oct. 6 (CB). A Tropical Kingbird, discovered at Paloma Ranch Sept. 29 (BG), was new for that area. A Bell's Vireo was found to be still singing at MCW on the late date of Sept. 4 (TC).

A small flock of Purple Martins (rare transients) were observed at MCW Sept. 4 (TC). Twenty-five late staying N. Rough-winged Swallows were counted at the Gravel Pit ponds s.w. of Dysart and Southern Nov. 5 (TC), one was reported at the GWR Nov. 16 (MM) and ten were seen at Tres Rios Nov. 18 (RWz et al.). A late Barn Swallow was also observed at the Gravel Pit ponds Nov. 5 (TC).

A Winter Wren was discovered at Seven Springs Nov. 5 (TC). Individual Golden-crowned Kinglets were found at the DBG Oct. 30 (LV,SBa et al.) and at the Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP) Nov. 19 (AK). A Townsend's Solitaire (irregular in the lowlands) was seen in an Ahwatukee yard Oct. 31 (SBa). A Swainson's Thrush was observed at MCW Sept. 4 (TC). A Rufous-backed Robin was discovered at the HRP Nov. 5 and remained into December (LHr et al.). Five N. Parulas were discovered in the county during the fall: a male at GWR Oct. 7 – 8 (SG et al.), one along the Fisherman's Trail at Granite Reef Picnic Area (GRPA) Oct. 9 – 17 (SG), a first year female at MCW Oct. 15 (TC), an adult female at Seven Springs Nov. 5 (TC), and one at the HRP Nov. 9 (JJo). A late-staying Yellow Warbler was seen at the

GRPA Oct. 10 (SG) and a very late individual was observed at the GWR Nov. 12 – 28 (JAlc,MM). Individual Chestnut-sided Warblers were found at Tres Rios Oct. 6 (CB) and at Rio Salado Nov. 11 into December (TGs et al.).

Individual adult male Magnolia Warblers were discovered at the GWR Oct. 7 – 20 (BW,RD,SG,JBu et al.) and in a Tolleson yard Oct. 15 (BG); there were nine previous county records. An adult male Black-throated Blue Warbler was found at the HRP Nov. 3 (R&SS) and remained at least until Nov. 9 (JJo). A Palm Warbler (a casual fall transient) was discovered at the GWR on the early date of Sept. 26 (MM); there were no previous county records before Oct. 11.

Individual Black-and-white Warblers were reported along the Agua Fria River and MCW below Lake Pleasant Oct. 7 – 15 (BG,TC), at the HRP Nov. 9 (JJo), and at the Tres Rios Cobble Ponds Nov. 26 (TC,DPO). A female Am. Redstart was observed at the GWR Oct. 8 – 20 (BH,LL,HB,DC et al.) and an immature male was seen at Paloma Ranch Oct. 12 (KR).

A male Kentucky Warbler, discovered at the GWR Oct. 7 (PM), provided only the seventh record for the county and the first for October. The Hooded Warbler, found at Rio Salado in July, remained at least until Oct. 8 (TB,PD); another individual was discovered at the Phoenix Zoo Sept. 16 (JJo). Individual late Yellow-breasted Chats were observed at MCW on the late date of Oct. 15 (TC) and at Tres Rios on the very late date of Nov. 15 (TC); the species is rarely recorded after the end of September;

continued on page 14

# Field Observations

Continued from page 13

there were no previous November records for the county.

A male Summer Tanager returned to a Tempe yard Oct. 30 for the sixth consecutive winter (BE). A Western Tanager was observed at MCW on the late date of Oct. 8 (TC).

Two early-arriving Chipping Sparrows were reported at Rio Salado Sept. 2 (TGs). A White-throated Sparrow was found at Tres Rios Nov. 1 (JJa). Two Harris's Sparrows (rare winter visitors) were discovered at the GWR Nov. 12 (JAlc) and one of them continued to be seen there into December (m.ob.). One Lapland Longspur and one Chestnut-sided Longspur were observed at the Rousseau Sod Farm Oct. 14 (RJ). Fifteen Chestnut-collared Longspurs were counted at Arlington Nov. 24 (TC). Individual male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found in a s.w. Phoenix yard Nov. 17 – 19 (LS) and in Chandler Nov. 19 (EJ). A late-staying Blue Grosbeak was observed at MCW Sept. 30 (CB,DPe). Two female Indigo Buntings (rare summer visitors) were found at the GWR Sept. 10 and a male was found there Sept. 26 (MM).

Two Eastern Meadowlarks (uncommon winter visitors) were observed at the Rousseau Sod Farm Oct. 14 (RJ). A female Orchard Oriole was discovered at the GWR Oct. 17 (HB) and remained until Nov. 28 (m.ob.). The Streak-backed Oriole returned to the GWR Oct. 7 for the second consecutive winter (SG,JM et al.).

Although numbers of Lawrence's Goldfinches were reported in southeast Arizona, only a few were detected in Maricopa County during the fall: four were counted at MCW

Oct. 9 and one was seen there Oct. 15 (TC), a female was reported at the GWR Oct. 15 – 18 (MM,MS), and a male was found there Oct. 29 – Nov. 3 (EH,JJo); one was observed at Tres Rios Nov. 5 (TC). Two Am. Goldfinches (uncommon winter visitors) were found at the GWR Nov. 3 – 8 (JJo,MS).

In Pinal County a Red-necked Grebe, discovered at Kearny Lake Nov. 15 (DJ), represented the eighth record for Arizona and the first for Pinal Co.; it remained at least until Dec. 1 (m.ob.). A Worm-eating Warbler was found at Whitlow Dam Nov. 30 (JBa). A beautiful hybrid Violet-crowned/Broad-billed Hummingbird was discovered at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA) Sept. 4 (JH) and continued to be seen there into December (m.ob.). A female Williamson's Sapsucker was observed at BTA Nov. 1 (SS). A male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was found at BTA Nov. 19 (SBu,RWz) and remained into December (m.ob.). A male Yellow-shafted Flicker was observed at BTA Nov. 9 (JBa).

Other unusual species reported at BTA during the fall were a Winter Wren Oct. 8 – Nov. 17 (RD), the Brown Thrasher back for the seventh consecutive winter Nov. 1 (SS), a Black-throated Green Warbler Nov. 4 (LM,KR), and between two and six Lawrence's Goldfinches Oct. 21 – Nov. 27 (m.ob.). An unusually large group of 10 – 15 "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows were reported at Oak Flat, n. of BTA Nov. 24 (PD).

In Apache County, near Springerville, a Tennessee Warbler was discovered at South Fork and a Dickcissel was found at Becker Lake Sept. 15 (CB,SS).

Abbreviations: Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), Granite Reef Picnic Area (GRPA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Morgan City Wash (MCW), many observers (m.ob.).

Observers: John Alcock, Jerry Allen, Charles Babbitt, Sally Barnes, Jack Bartley, Harold Bond, Terry Brodner, Scott Burge, Jim Burns, Clifford Cathers, Dale Clark, Jack Cochran, Troy Corman, Henry Detwiler, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Kreg Ellzey, Brian Enos, Herb Fibel, Craig Fischer, Steve Ganley, Tom Gaskill, Tom Gatz, Bill Grossi, Ron Haaseth, Paul Halesworth, Lauren Harter, Jim Hays, Bill Higgins Jack Holloway, Eric Hough, Elizabeth Jacobsen, Jukka Jantunen, Doug Jenness, Justin Jones, Roy Jones, Alan Knue, Larry Langstaff, Mark Larson, Eric Lattuner, Linda Mason, James McKay, Michael Moore, Robert Mortensen, Pete Moulton, Dave Pearson, Dave Powell, Kurt Rademaker, Jillian Rice, Myron Scott, Leanna Shaberly, Richard & Sharon Skevington, Sig Stangeland, Andre Tarby, Marceline Vandewater, Lynn Vogel, Magill Weber, Barbara Winterfield, Robert Witzeman.

## Finches and Kinglets and Towhees -- Oh My! Superior Christmas Tallies 5,400 Birds Paul Wolderback

**H**ow many sparrows would you expect to find from Oak Flats down through Superior and continuing West towards Queen Valley? How many hawks, hummingbirds, wrens and even sandpipers?

"Once again White-crowned Sparrows rule!" reports Superior Christmas Bird Count (CBC) compiler Cynthia Donald. "We counted a total of 944 White-crowns among our overall total of 5,451 individuals for the entire count circle, which stretches from Oak Flat and Montaña Mountain down through Superior to Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Whitlow Dam and Queen Valley. Our other most common species include the beautiful little Black-throated Sparrow (488), Dark-eyed Junco (403), and Gambel's Quail (384)." "We were delighted to find a few unusual migrants such as the Rufous-backed Robin, Brown Thrasher and the lingering Summer Tanager at the Arboretum. Whitlow Dam and Queen Valley had migrating wintering sparrows and

warblers along with our resident species. Oak Flat provides great habitat for wintering birds as well as our less common residents. We were happy to find Crissal Thrasher in good numbers, Fox Sparrow, Black-chinned Sparrow, Spotted, Green-tailed and Canyon Towhees. We have a wintering Lewis' Woodpecker again this year who was busy chasing Gila Woodpeckers from his acorn stash. We added Mountain and Western Bluebirds as well."

This year we had enough volunteers to survey a few new regions within the count circle, but we always have room for more help with next year's CBC. I encourage anyone who is interested in helping count birds to assist with the North American Migratory Bird Count on May 12, 2007. These are similar to the CBC's, but target spring migrants. To participate in Pinal or Gila counties, contact the Arizona Game and Fish Department for more details. Total Species numbered 104, with an impressive 5,451 individual birds.

Scottsdale Ponds-Dec 4, 2006: On Monday, December

4, 2006, three Arizonans and three foreigners (well, Minnesota and Washington state) joined the bird walk at the Scottsdale Ponds: seven ponds at the Pavilions Shopping Center, Chart House, McCormick Ranch and Chaparral Park. In addition to the typical, expected waterfowl wintering in the Valley, we saw western grebes, and common and hooded mergansers. The reported black-bellied whistling duck, fulvous whistling duck and Ross's goose all lingering at the Chaparral Park lake were very cooperative. Shorebirds included one least sandpiper mercilessly harassed by great-tailed grackles, a spotted sandpiper, black-necked stilts and killdeer. The remarkable sighting of the day was a Cooper's hawk, not eight feet above our heads, in a tree between ponds at McCormick Ranch. It was finishing a rock pigeon—or whatever other bird has large pink inedible feet—all that was left. A couple of northern songbirds, dark-eyed juncos and a white-breasted nuthatch, made appearances near the same area; the latter was a nice surprise. The group tallied forty-six species in all.



# Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

Here are three large, conspicuous birds flying overhead. Two of the three species should be easy, but the third can be somewhat problematical. We've featured two of these three in past Photo Quizzes, two of the three have quite variable plumage stages or phases, and two of these three photos show us interesting flight feather features we don't often see. To make the quiz a little more challenging, see if you can identify any of the birds to gender.

A) Good photo, easy bird

Even if you were born in a cave and raised by wolves you'll probably recognize our first quiz bird as an adult Bald Eagle. There is no other raptor so readily recognizable in this country that it evokes a visceral response from birders and non-birders alike. That's because there is no other raptor that shows all white at both ends of its body like this bird.

That said, you really should take the time and effort to understand the stages of Bald Eagle plumage. Immature Bald Eagles do not have white heads and are often misidentified as Goldens. Bald Eagles take from four to five years to acquire full adult plumage. The four subadult age classes are labeled Juvenile, Basic I, Basic II, and Basic III. By Basic III, sometime during a Bald Eagle's third year, the dark head of the immature begins to lighten as the body darkens. Though these third to fourth-year birds

will show increasingly white heads and tails and can be quite readily identified to species, they retain some dark tail feathers and an Osprey-like dark eyeline. If you look carefully at this photo, you see there is still just a hint of dark feathering around the eye and in the tail, indicating this bird is just passing from Basic III to full adult.

This almost fully adult Bald Eagle was photographed at the Granite Reef Recreation Area along the Salt River in April, 2004. Is it male or female? We don't know. Males and females of this species appear the same in all plumages. Is it an Arizona breeder or a late migrant on its way to breeding grounds in the northern Rockies? We don't know. Although our southwestern subspecies of Bald Eagle is slightly smaller than northern birds, that difference would be impossible to discern without in-hand measurements of wing and tail lengths.

Here's what we do know. Bald Eagles soar on flat wings, have relatively huge heads and massive bills for tearing through tough fish scales, and immatures will always show white in the axillaries (armpits). Goldens, by comparison, sometimes soar with wings held in a shallow dihedral (slightly upswept), have relatively smaller heads and smaller, buteo-like bills for ripping soft rodent skin, and immatures never have white armpits though some may show white at the bases of the inner primaries and outer

secondaries (flight feathers). Probably the best location in Arizona for studying many Bald Eagles in a variety of plumages is Mormon Lake, near Flagstaff, in late winter.

B) Good photo, easy bird

Several times a year an enthusiastic non-birding friend will excitedly report to me they've seen a Bald Eagle fishing in one of the Valley's canals. I can't deny this possibility, but I can say that I've never seen an eagle around our canals. However, I've seen many of our second quiz birds fishing the Valley's canal system, and it's easy to understand the non-birder's excitement—huge bird, white head, feet first plunge dive.

Bald Eagles are increasingly being seen, especially in winter, around some of our lakes and larger ponds, specifically those on McCormick Ranch, but I believe the canals are too small and devoid of suitable perches for such a large species. The large, white-headed raptors I have seen around our canals are not as big as eagles, and they sport the "racing stripe" which we see in this second photo, the dark eyeline through the white head which marks this fishing hawk as an Osprey.

Ospreys overhead will show a white body and forewing bordered by dark carpal (wrist) bars and dark flight feathers on the underwing. Their unique flight jizz (style) should become readily recognizable with some

practice, the relatively long wings bowed downward in flight like those of a gull. The bird in the photo is a male lacking the necklace of dark streaks on the upper breast which will show on females and the occasional male.

This photo is interesting because the obvious gaps in the bird's wings show wing molt in progress, a process we usually notice only in large birds such as raptors flying overhead. Primaries are numbered outward and primary molt typically progresses outward. When this osprey's first two new primaries have partially grown in, the next two will be shed. Wing molt is partial, sequential, and symmetrical so that birds retain their flight capability as it is taking place.

Ospreys are exquisitely adapted for their fishing lifestyle. Like owls and woodpeckers, they have zygodactyl toes (outer toes reversible), and the pads of the Osprey's toes are barbed, both special features making it easier to grasp and lift their slippery prey. And they always transport prey fish head forward for more efficient flight.

Ospreys breed in and around the Valley, with greater numbers passing through during migration and some overwintering as well. In the past they have nested along the Salt River just west of the Granite Reef Recreation Area and just east of Tempe Town Lake. Ospreys can be seen almost daily patrolling the lakes along the

Scottsdale Greenbelt and at the Gilbert Riparian Area where this photo was taken in January, 2006. During late summer and fall this past year one was reliably seen fishing in the Crosscut Canal along Indian School Road from a perch atop the huge metal utility poles on the south side of the canal just west of 56th Street at Indian School.

C) Good photo, difficult bird  
This photo illustrates the difficulty in assigning common names to our avian species. Because this is North America's most common and widespread raptor, it has become the generic *buteo* (a genus of hawks with broad wings and short tails typically seen soaring over open areas), the hawk with which all others are compared. But because of its geographic variation and its several color phases, this species bedevils beginning birders and is often itself misidentified or becomes the mistaken identification for many of our other hawks.

Even in a color photograph, our third quiz bird would not match its common name. Why would a hawk sporting small, neat rows of brown and white tail bands be labeled "Red-tailed Hawk?" Well, for the same reason your oldest son, tow-headed as a youth, now has hair darker than yours. This is a juvenile bird. This is a classic light phase western variant juvenile, the Red-tail you're most likely to see around the Valley in winter.

When this same bird returns next year, you won't recognize it because its tail will then be the color of pale bricks and its "cummerbund" of belly spots will be obscured by a warm rufous wash. What remains the same, though, is the plumage characteristic that always identifies Red-tails, regardless of geography or color phase--the dark patagial bars along the underside of the inner wing (shoulders). On any raptor soaring overhead, always look first for patagial bars. If it has them, it's a Red-tail.

What is the Red-tail in this photo, taken at Papago Park in October, 1999 doing? It's not soaring. It's hovering, treading air on a warm updraft along the east face of the formation south of Hole-In-The-Rock. This is evident because the bird's alula (al-YOU-la), the small wing extensions between the shoulders and the "wrists" have been deployed. The alula help flying birds brake and steer, and they are also utilized by loons and alcids pursuing underwater prey.

Winter is raptor season in the Valley, a good opportunity to study the wonders of flight and hone your hawk identification skills. Croplands on the Reservation east of Scottsdale, around the town of Maricopa, and in the far west Valley are excellent classrooms. And if you see an eagle splashing into a canal, let me know.

### Monthly Meetings

First Tuesday of the month, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall, at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), except for our annual banquet in May at Shalimar Country Club in Tempe. The DBG is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona. This is approximately 1/4 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. For a map, please see the DBG website at [www.dbg.org/](http://www.dbg.org/).

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG, and there will be signs directing you to the meeting place. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at [www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org). Pre-meeting dinners (October through April) are held at Pete's 19th Tee, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course), starting at 6:00 p.m.

### Membership Information--see notes and announcements for more detail

Your National membership entitles you to membership in the National Audubon Society and the Maricopa Audubon Society. National members receive bi-monthly issues of Audubon Magazine and quarterly issues of the Cactus Wren-dition. For all new National Audubon memberships send check or money order payable to National Audubon Society to: Membership Chair, Jack Follett.

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### Submissions

Copy for The Cactus Wren-dition must be received by the editor by e-mail, (may be on computer diskette, or typed and double-spaced; however, this is not preferred) by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: Cactus Wren-dition Editor, Deva Burns. [devaburns@aol.com](mailto:devaburns@aol.com)

### Opinions

The opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the National Audubon Society or the Maricopa Audubon Society.

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