



The Cactus Wren • dition

Volume LVI, No. 2

Summer 2007



American Avocets

Maricopa Audubon Meetings and Programs

Cynthia Donald

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 for the location of the May 2008 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.

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.

Committees/Support

Activist Alert
Shawn Baur
602-828-3607

shawnbaur@hotmail.com

Arizona Audubon Council Rep
Herb Fibel
herbertsfibel@aol.com

Book Store

Field Observations
Janet Witzeman
602-840-6089
jwitzeman@aol.com

Hospitality
David Chorlton
602-253-5055

Web Page
Kurt Rademaker
480.837-2446
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

Brown Canyon is the little known jewel of the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in south central Arizona. Noted wildlife artist Ray Harm sold his Brown Canyon property to the refuge and encouraged other canyon ranchers to do the same. The resulting riparian paradise provides a beautiful, peaceful interlude to those of us wanting to escape the city. It is one of four sections of the Buenos Aires which was originally acquired to reintroduce and protect the Masked Bobwhite. Hiking the rugged canyon on a recent Saturday, it was hard to imagine anyone trying to run cattle there. With the cattle gone, the habitat is making a slow comeback, and we saw Gray Hawks and Zone-taileds prospecting the cottonwoods for summer homes. Brown is open only by reservation and for a small fee. Call 520-823-4251 or access the refuge on the web for information.

Check out the Field Trip Reports page. Although it is well past Christmas,

Walter Thurber's Carefree Christmas Bird Count summary is of interest. (With only 4 issues a year, the Cactus Wren-dition strives for information not timeliness.) Do you know which of the summer passerines are having their orange juice in Jim's Photo Quiz? Also, if you like Condors, I think you will really appreciate Sophie Osborn's Condors in Canyon Country briefly reviewed in Notes and Announcements.

In the past I have found it hard to think about birding in Phoenix in the summer. However, Bob's article reminded me of the wonderful opportunity that the Gilbert Water Ranch provides. Black-necked Stilts and American Avocets are gorgeous shorebirds, and among my favorites, and they nest right here in the Valley! He also notes that Gilbert has opened a third area. Birders should soon be reporting finds from there.

So, even though Summer is here, sling your binoculars around your neck and Go Birding!



Copulating American Avocets; photographed by Jim Burns at Gilbert Riparian Area, Gilbert, AZ, March, 2007 with Canon EOS 1D body and Canon 600mm f/4 lens.

President's Message

Herb Fibel

from the president

There's no doubt about it. This has been a challenging year for Maricopa Audubon. Our field trip chairman, our membership chairman, our treasurer, and our secretary, key chapter leaders all, bailed on us after being elected to the current board. As many of you have heard by now, National Audubon has given provisional approval to Desert Rivers Audubon, and we look forward to working with them and the other Valley chapter in the many areas where we have common interests.

Our successes for the year are numerous. First of all, we're still here. Further, we have a full board of dedicated people, each devoted to the principles upon which Audubon was founded: "Saving birds, other wildlife and their habitats," who are working in concert with one another to achieve that goal.

MAS hosted a successful Arizona Audubon Council meeting in Tempe in January. The Basic Birding classes, which I teach three times a year, co-sponsored by Tempe Parks and Recreation, continue to attract novice birders. In addition to becoming birding enthusiasts upon graduating, most also pick up the ethic of conservation from the class, and are motivated toward becoming active Audubon members.

Thanks to the efforts of our newsletter editor, Deva Burns, your Cactus Wren-dition continues to be one of the top chapter publications in the U.S. Deva's husband, Jim, in addition to being a major contributor

to the Wren-dition, with his Photo Quiz and with timely and well written bird related newsletter articles, continues to write a bi-monthly column for the Republic promoting birds, birding, and the sustaining of a healthy environment. Kurt Radamaker, our webmaster, keeps our web page colorful, informative and timely, is our Internet voice to the world, and is the compiler of the Salt-Verde CBC.

Laurie Nessel, who stepped over from publicity chair to field trip chair, has put together a diverse array of field trips, clear through the summer and fall, while our program chairperson Cynthia Donald has provided us with a variety of interesting chapter meeting programs throughout the year and is working on our next fiscal year's programs already as well. Laurie and Cynthia also wear other hats. Laurie is active on the conservation committee and helps with book and t-shirt sales, while Cynthia is putting together our annual banquet, is working to become a birding class teacher and serves as the compiler for the Superior CBC.

Kudos, too, to our new membership chairman, Jack Follett, who stepped into a complex and frustrating job; our publicity person, Fred Stewart, his wife Maureen, who, as secretary, puts together a smashing set of minutes; and Mark Horlings, our treasurer, who has kept us fiscally responsible this past year.

Then there is our vice-president, Dr. Robin Silver, and our conservation chairman, retired

doctor, Bob Witzeman, legendary environmentalists, who rank right up there with Edward Abbey and Barbara Kingsolver, at least in dedication and in name recognition, if not in literary output.

Many others have made contributions, too—Doug Green, who stepped down as education chairman, but hasn't quit working; Mark Larson, our new education chairman, who has returned to Phoenix and intends to stay here for good; Janet Witzeman as book salesperson and quarterly "Field Observations" Wren-dition, reporter, which she has been writing for as long as I can remember; and David Chorlton, our poet laureate, who has volunteered to be our hospitality chair and is a member of our nominating committee, as were Charles Babbitt and Susan Steadman.

It is said that when you run through a list of contributors to the cause that you are bound to miss someone and offend them. Here are some more people who helped this year: Scott Burge, CBC compilers Troy Corman and Walter Thurber; all of our meeting program presenters, and Pete Moulton and Tom and Linda Partel, (Big Sitters!)

It has been a MAS year of people, but for as many people who have helped, we still seek more volunteers. Call me or talk to me when you see me. MAS needs YOU!

Notes & Announcements

Audubon Celebration – September 14-16, Tempe, AZ. See complete details elsewhere in this newsletter or on the web.

California Condors – Condors in Canyon Country: The Return of the California Condor to the Grand Canyon Region by Sophie

Osborn is a very illuminating and compelling book on the history of the Condor project in the United States. It is published by the Grand Canyon Association which is a nonprofit that has been supporting the education and science of Grand Canyon

National Park for 75 years. Sophie Osborn spent over 3 years as the manager of the Condor project for The Peregrine Fund and puts her readers right on the edge! If you haven't been to the Canyon to see the Condors, this book will send you on your way. For more information and to order visit www.grandcanyon.org. Your purchase will help support the educational goals of Grand Canyon National Park.

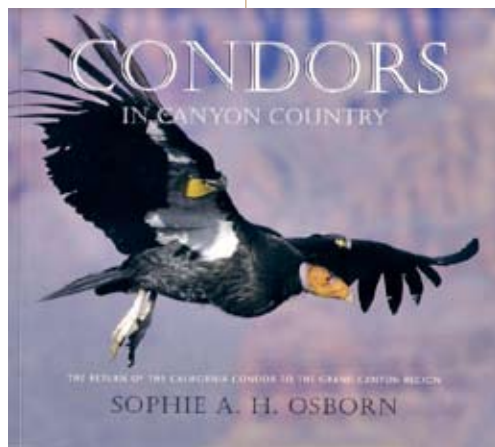
Hummingbirds – Frequently Asked Questions About Hummingbirds by Rose Houk. This is a very concise and brief booklet that can answer your basic questions about hummingbirds. It is available from your bookseller or Western National Parks Association at 888-569-7762 or at their webstore at

www.wnpa.org. The suggested retail price is \$4.95. You may also contact Derek Gallagher in Tucson at 520-622-1999 or derek@wnpa.org.

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, 480.968.5614

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.

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.

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 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 43rd 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. I think Audubon should offer something like this!

The Dovetail Directory (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 be 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 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.

More birding and nature festivals. www.americanbirding.org, and www.birdinghotspot.com.

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts—For information, contact Laurie Nessel at

(480) 968-5614 or mail to:
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.

Audubon Celebration 2007

Co-sponsored by Arizona Audubon Council and Audubon Arizona

YOU ARE INVITED – LET'S FLOCK TOGETHER!

Sept. 14th -16th 2007
Fiesta Inn Resort, Tempe AZ

Join with friends old and new for a weekend of fun and opportunity to include the following:

- John Flicker, President and CEO of the National Audubon Society.
- Jerry Jackson, renowned ornithologist, author, and popular writer for Birdwatcher's Digest.
- César Mazier, President of César Mazier Landscaping & Consulting and past director of horticulture for the Desert Botanical Garden.
- Homer Hansen, chairman of the annual "Wings Over Willcox" birdwatching festival and sparrow expert.
- Jim Burns, wildlife photographer and writer of "Bird Is a Verb," a bimonthly birding column for the Arizona Republic.
- Betsy Loyless, Senior Vice-President for Policy in Audubon's Washington office.
- David L. Pearson, Research Professor at Arizona State College and author and co-author of books in the Ecotravellers' Wildlife Guide series.
- Rose Ann Rowlett, of Field Guides- professionally guided bird- watching trips to 100 destinations worldwide.
- Leadership training for Chapter leaders, such as fund raising, planning and implementing an education program, attracting new members, etc.
- Important Bird Area training on Friday.
- A variety of Sunday field trips such as Rio Salado, Gilbert Riparian Preserve, Tres Rios, Boyce Thompson Arboretum and more...
- Silent Auction, Raffle, more fun...and, of course, great birding!!!

Conference Registration is \$85 per person (includes box lunch, banquet dinner, attendance for all Saturday workshops and Sunday field trips ~ Friday workshops extra). For further details and to request a registration packet, call Donna at 602-468-6470 or email egret@cox.net. Early registration is encouraged as some events will be limited.

Discover the upbeat charm of Tempe's Fiesta Inn Resort. A splendid oasis with more than a hint of Frank Lloyd Wright's design influence, all the Resort's rooms have been recently updated with pillow top mattresses, complimentary wireless internet, and oxygenic showers. The Conference Rate is \$86 per night plus tax (conference rate must be booked by phone). Call 1-800—528-6481~ www.fiestainnresort.com.

Register for the Conference prior to August 1st and your name will be entered into a drawing for a special prize.



Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

No family of North American birds is attracted to citrus as readily as that represented here by these three species enjoying their breakfast orange juice. Only one of these photos was taken in Arizona, though two could have been.



B) Good photo, easy bird



B) Bad photo, easy bird



C) Good photo, difficult bird

All Photos by Jim Burns

Tropical Kingbird

Jim Burns

Tyrannus melancholicus. The first Tropical Kingbird I ever saw was in the big old cottonwoods at Canoa Ranch. Birders were welcome there, then, at the entrance pond on the east side of I-10 south of Tucson. Now it's a new home development. The second Tropical Kingbird I ever saw was in the big old cottonwoods at Guevavi Ranch. Birders were welcome there, then, at the entrance pond along River Road north of Nogales. They aren't anymore. One was caught smoking around the hay barn. The third Tropical Kingbird I ever saw was in the big old cottonwoods at Kino Springs. Birders are still welcome there at the ponds around the golf course, but it's called Estancia Yerba Buena now, and the cottonwoods are gone!

Kenn Kaufman calls Tyrannus melancholicus "the quietest and most inconspicuous of the four kingbird species present in Arizona." Beginning in the early 1990s Tropicals began to be found in south Texas, where they overlapped with their close relative, Couch's Kingbird. Now there are so many there South Texas birders are using the word "invasion" for Tropicals. Unlike other kingbirds, Tropicals are seldom found in flocks."

Despite the fate of my first three sites, and though they are considered uncommon and local, Tropical Kingbirds are still widespread in southern Arizona . . . for now. Big old cottonwoods and water, at low elevations. That combination still exists in southern Arizona . . . for now. But in southern Arizona, Tropicals are irregular. I've seen them nesting in the same tree along Arivaca Creek for three years running, then nowhere in the area the following year.

Undoubtedly the easiest and most regular place to see this bird is summertime at Arivaca Cienega. Happily they can also still be found nesting around the ponds at the former Kino Springs, in many locations along the San Pedro River (Kingfisher Pond south of San Pedro House) and the Santa Cruz River (the trails behind Tumacacori), and the ponds at Rio Rico.

Tropicals arrive in Arizona early in May and leave by late September. Cottonwoods are the preferred nest tree and the nest, built by the female, is a cup of plant material placed on a wide horizontal branch or in a fork. Only the female incubates, but both

parents bring food to the nest. There are multiple references to southern Arizona's four kingbirds tolerating one another nesting in neighboring trees, but the Tropicals I observed nesting along Arivaca Creek were anything but quiet and inconspicuous whenever the Thick-billeds nesting just downcreek landed even briefly and attempted to hawk insects from atop the Tropicals nest tree.

Tropicals, like their tyrannus congeners, take larger insects--wasps, bees, large flies, grasshoppers--out of the air with their beaks. At times they will hover over prey items on the ground before dropping to the capture. Early and late in the day they are sometimes seen circling a pond or waterhole, swallow-like, to catch prey, and they have been known to take small lizards and frogs. Berries are a part of the winter diet

Arizona's kingbirds do not present the same identification challenge as the empidonax or myiarchus flycatcher groups, but Tropical, Cassin's, and Western are more than just superficially similar, so observers should review the most salient distinguishing features of these three before setting out. If your kingbird is vocalizing, you're probably not going to miss. Kenn Kaufman calls the Tropical's song a "metallic, twittering, trill." It is quite distinct from the others, and from Thick-billed, and is often transcribed as "Pip-pip-pip-pip."

All the guide books mention that Tropical Kingbird has a longer, larger bill and a darker ear patch than Cassin's and Western, but I have seldom found these keys useful in the field while looking at a lone bird. Looking for green on a kingbird breast or olive on a kingbird back? Lots of luck, even though these color references often appear in the guide books! I have never seen the former and have seen the latter only a handful of times in thirty-five years of looking at kingbirds.

To me the overall color and pattern of the head, and the color and shape of the tail are the best diagnostics other

than voice. The head of Tropical always appears to me not only very pale overall, but more uniform than that of Western and Cassin's. This is because the Tropical's white throat is more extensive than that of Westerns, and of course the white on the face of the Cassin's is really only in the chin area and contrasts noticeably and sharply with the rest of the head.

The Tropical Kingbird tail is brown and notched. The Western tail is black with white outer feathers (except for worn adults in late summer) and straight across. The Cassin's tail is dark brown with narrow buffy tips and is also straight across. Always beware of the angle of light when evaluating head and tail color, and always beware of odd sight angles when evaluating tail shape.

Tropical Kingbird is notorious as a post-breeding wanderer up the coast of California in the fall, and in south Texas some remain all winter. If you think a Tropical in these two situations might be difficult to identify, imagine the debate stirred up by a lone kingbird which appeared in December, 2003 at the Gilbert Riparian area just south of Phoenix. Although Tropical Kingbird has bred, irregularly to be sure, as far north in Arizona as the Marana pecan grove and the

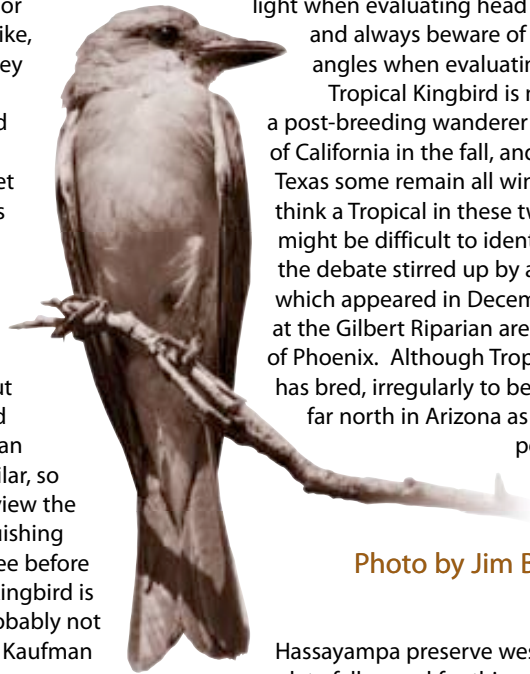


Photo by Jim Burns

Hassayampa preserve west of Phoenix, a late fall record for this species in Phoenix was unprecedented. And then someone mentioned Couch's! Until Roy Jones was able to record snatches of this Tropical's voice, the delicious possibility of a first state record Couch's drew birders from all over Arizona.

Tyrannus melancholicus. You recognize by now the genus name means "king" or "ruler." The roots of the species name should be apparent too--melancholy. I'm just guessing its relevance to this species may have something to do with the emotions evoked in some early observer upon hearing its vocals, but this special species' species name may unfortunately take on added significance in the years ahead. Cattle grazing . . . urban development . . . water table . . . big old cottonwoods. Connect the dots. Tropical Kingbirds fans should be melancholy too.

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.maricopaudubon.org/calendar.htm>.

Impromptu Birding Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others planned field trips on short notice. Founded by naturalist Mike Plagens, membership is easy, free and open to those who have an interest in the flora, fauna, and ecology of Arizona. Not just a trip listing, view the website for trip reports, flora and fauna databases, maps, links to google earth including Gilbert Water ranch, and photos. Trips focus on plants, animals, mycology, geology, biology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, paleontology, birding, anthropology or microbiology. Share expenses, experiences and expertise with like-minded travelers. Proposed trips should include a brief description of the destination, ways, means, purpose, hiking difficulty, departure location, date and time. Drivers and riders will negotiate between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes.

http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/

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

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips April - August

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 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 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, 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

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

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 Reservations: Laurie Nessel, laurienessel@hotmail.com, 480.968. 5614

Wednesday, June 6

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Bring binoculars (close focal point preferred). Call leader for info on good, inexpensive field guides, or use the leader's book. Learn to identify Painted Lady, Giant Sulphur, Queen, Buckeye, Giant Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies; Desert Firetail, Blue-ringed Dancer, Northern Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer and Bluet dragonflies and damselflies. Meet 6:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. Contact leader for reservations. Leader: Bob Witzeman, 602.840.0052, witzeman@cox.net

Sat. June 16

Flagstaff/San Francisco Peaks. Enjoy a full day of birding in the shadow of Arizona's tallest peaks. We will visit the Coconino National Forest above 9000' in search of Three-toed Woodpecker and Clark's Nutcracker. We will then look for pinyon-juniper species like Pinyon Jay and Gray Flycatcher. Mountain bird songs will be emphasized. Meet at 7:30a.m at the Museum of Northern Arizona located just north of Flagstaff on US 180. Bring a lunch. Limit: None. Difficulty: 3 (fairly easy hike at high altitude). Contact leader for information and reservations. Leader: Charles Babbitt, 602.840.1771, cjbabbitt@cox.net

Saturday, June 23

Spur Cross Ranch. We will visit this pristine upper Sonoran desert area saved from development. Cave Creek flows through this county park. We will also tour Jewel of the Creek, adjacent to Spur Cross, for nesting

Ravens and other resident breeders including Summer Tanager, Orioles, Black-throated Sparrows. Meet 5:00AM at the Spur Cross parking lot.

Leader: Carlos Ross
Contact: Laurie Nessel, laurienessel@hotmail.com, 480.968.5614 for carpool information and reservations.

Saturday, July 12 and Sunday, July 13

Tonto Creek Hatchery and Tonto Natural Bridge. Enjoy a respite from the valley heat in this Rim Country get away. Meet 8:00am Saturday at Tonto Creek Hatchery for Summer Tanager, Blackhawk, and Black-headed Grosbeak. Have a sack lunch and spend the afternoon birding the deciduous woodland of Box Elder, Az.Walnut, Ponderosa, and Fir at Mel and Ann Bramleys cabin on the E. Verde River 15 miles outside Payson. Dinner is Pot luck. Bring a sleeping bag and pillow and Sunday breakfast (kitchen available). Meet 8:00AM at the Tonto Natural Bridge (\$7 entry fee) for eye-level warblers, Stellers and Mexican Jays, Hepatic Tanager and Plumbeous Vireo. End by noon. Limit 12.

Leader: Mel Bramley
Contact: Laurie Nessel for reservations. laurienessel@hotmail.com, 480.968.5614

Wednesday, July 18

Hart Prairie Preserve. At 8500', this Nature Conservancy property 14 miles northwest of Flagstaff provides a cool summer retreat at the base of Arizona's Highest Peak, Mount Humphreys. We will bird with on-site hosts in the morning, then have sack lunch on the patio for a presentation on this TNC preserve. Optional afternoon birding. The 245-acre preserve is home to uncommon wildflowers, old growth ponderosa pine, a rare grove of Bebb willows, herds of elk and deer, porcupine, prairie dogs and more than 40 species of birds. Possible species include Clark's Nutcracker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Western and Mountain Bluebirds, Williamson's Sapsucker and raptors. We will meet at Basha's on Humphrey Road, in Flagstaff at 7:00 a.m. and carpool to the preserve. Bring lunch. Limit 15. Difficulty 2. Leaders: Doug and Diana Iverson Reservations: laurienessel@hotmail.com, 480.968.5614

Saturday, July 28 & Sunday, July 29

White Mountains. Enjoy two days of birding. From juniper grasslands to mixed conifer and spruce-fir forests, elevations from 6,000-11,000', the White Mountains harbors species from Gray Jays, Blue Grouse and Three-toed Woodpecker to Gray Catbird, Pinyon Jay and Lewis's Woodpecker. We will bird Sunrise Ski Area and the Little

Colorado River. Limit 15.
Leader: Scott Burge, 480.968.5141 for information and reservations.

Saturday, August 11

Page Springs. We will visit the Page Springs fish hatchery near Camp Verde and bird other nearby locations. Possible Yellow-billed Cuckoo, American Redstart and Prothonotary Warbler. Spotting scopes are helpful. Bring lunch. Call leader for meeting time and place.

Leader: Herb Fibel. 480.966.5246, herbertsfibel@aol.com

Saturday, August 25

Rio Salado. The Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area is centered on the restored permanent flow in the Salt River in central Phoenix. Since opening in November, 2005, it has attracted 191 bird species, about 50 of which breed there. A typical morning at the Rio produces 50-60 species (although 70 is possible). Our leader, Tom Gaskill, has been monitoring bird populations since the project opened. The channel has extensive reedbeds and willows, with breeding populations of Cinnamon Teal, Black-crowned Night Herons, Moorhens, Black-necked Stilts, Yellowthroats, and Song Sparrows, among others. A rich variety of nearby habitats provide a remarkably diverse array of species in a small area. Constructed wetlands and a cottonwood forest attract a warblers, sparrows, tanagers, orioles and Lazuli Buntings. Desert scrub and grasslands have Lark Sparrows, Rock Wrens, Bendire's Thrashers, Horned Larks and Peregrine Falcon. Rarities include little Blue Herons, Glossy and White Ibis, Hooded and Chestnut-sided Warblers, and Sprague's Pipits. Meet at the visitors' plaza on the north bank at Central Avenue (one and a half blocks south of I-17) at 6:30AM. Difficulty 2. Easy, two mile walk. Bring a snack, plenty of water and wear a hat and comfortable shoes. Finish about noon. Limit 15.

Leader: Tom Gaskill, gaskillt@mindspring.com, or 480.968.5614

Continuing:

Third Saturdays: Family Bird Walks at the Gilbert Water Ranch sponsored by Friends of Audubon Arizona, 8AM-12AM. April will be the last walk until October

Mondays: Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens, free with admission to the garden. Call the Garden for time--time varies with the season.

Maricopa Audubon obtains Important Bird Area designation for Gilbert ponds

Bob Witzeman

Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little. – Edmund Burke

We are proud to declare that the City of Gilbert's two effluent groundwater recharge ponds were designated January 26, 2007 as a nationally significant "Important Bird Area" by the Audubon Society's Science Committee.

Maricopa Audubon Society members starting in 2004 planned year-round birdlife surveys over 8 ponds and 37 stations at the Gilbert Water Ranch (at Greenfield and Guadalupe Roads) and 11 ponds and 21 stations at Gilbert's Neely Road Recharge facility (¼ mile north of Elliot and Cooper Roads). Cynthia Donald headed the Maricopa Audubon Society IBA team of volunteers which canvassed the area's birds.

The mud flats of the two recharge facilities provide summer nesting habitat for two spectacularly beautiful shorebirds, the Black-necked Stilt and American Avocet. And each fall when temperatures plummet in Alaska, Canada, and the northern U.S., the Gilbert, Arizona recharge ponds become a winter haven for a multitude of migratory sandpipers, waterfowl and songbirds.

Sandpipers feed on the rich invertebrates found in the mudflats and sandbars there. This includes Western Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, Pectoral Sandpipers, Least Sandpipers, Long-billed Dowitchers, and Greater Yellowlegs. They fly on average 2500 miles to reach Gilbert's ponds, or some 5000 miles round trip!

One outstanding long distance shorebird wintering at the Gilbert Ponds is the Long-billed Dowitcher. It over-winters in flocks in the hundreds. This sandpiper breeds along the extreme northern shores of the Arctic Ocean in Alaska, eastern Siberia, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories. The round-trip migratory flight from its arctic nesting grounds to the Gilbert ponds is 6400 miles! Also over-wintering at the Gilbert ponds from Alaska is the Least Sandpiper, the world's smallest sandpiper, only 6 inches long and weighing but 0.7 ounces.

The lush native Arizona vegetation planted at these ponds provides habitat for well over 200 migratory and nesting bird species. These ponds have been a magnet for both birds and birdwatchers

since the construction of the Neely Road ponds in 1991 and the Greenfield Road ponds in 1999. Exciting recent surprises have included Streak-backed Oriole, Groove-billed Ani, Elegant Tern, Harris's Sparrow, and Prairie Warbler. All of these records have been recorded in the Cactus-Wrendition's "Field Observations" and covered on internet hotlines, by telephone etc.

Relocated Burrowing Owls, rescued from land developer's bulldozers, have been given new underground homes at the Gilbert Riparian Institute. They are (or were) one of the favorite attractions for the general public. They are doing poorly there, possibly because this bird haven has become a cat haven for cats that have been abandoned, released or just gravitated there.

We can thank the foresight of the farsighted city fathers of the City of Gilbert, Arizona for making their wastewater recharge facilities available for the public to enjoy. Others to be credited include Arizona's lottery-financed Heritage Fund, Scott Anderson, Director of the Gilbert Riparian Institute, the weekly walks provided by the Institute's Ranger, Scott Eames, and all the Maricopa Audubon volunteers who have been leading birding trips at both ponds since 1991 and 1999.

The Maricopa Audubon Society wishes to thank Cynthia Donald and her team of MAS members who, summer and winter, over the past months, tirelessly committed themselves to the IBA canvassing of the wildlife at Gilbert's recharge ponds. Cynthia Donald coordinated the Maricopa Audubon Society's IBA study team. It included MAS members Kathe Anderson, Jack Follett, Mark Horlings, Ginny Horlings, Brian Ison, and Peter Moulton.

Arizona today has over 30 IBAs. They represent areas of significant importance to birdlife due to their accompanying plants, wildlife, and geology. The Maricopa Audubon Society submitted nominations and data for Arizona's first two IBA areas in 2001, namely, the priceless and ever vulnerable riparian reaches of the Salt and Verde Rivers in the northeastern Valley and upstream into the Mazatzal Mountains, and the Salt and Gila Rivers in central Arizona up to Painted Rock Dam. These areas were formerly threatened with dam constructions, channelization, stream

diversions and, most seriously, by the miles and miles of stream flow and flood flow attenuations caused by those upstream dams.

Those two IBA habitats which MAS submitted included such imperiled, federally listed (endangered or threatened) species as Arizona's Desert-Nesting Bald Eagle, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Yuma Clapper Rail. Other areas submitted and approved for IBA status by the Maricopa Audubon Society include the Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge, a riparian and wetlands treasure-trove which provides habitat for the endangered Yuma Clapper Rail and Black Rail.

We are pleased that the Arizona Republic published two full color photographs by Jim Burns of two of the species of shorebirds Cynthia's team documented as nesting at the Gilbert Ponds; namely, the American Avocet and the Black-necked Stilt. And in Jim's regular Republic column was a superb photo of that tireless long range migrant and Arctic Ocean breeding species, the Long-billed Dowitcher.

Now another exciting treat is on the way for Maricopa Audubon Society birders. Two of your Maricopa Audubon Society Board members, Cynthia Donald and Bob Witzeman, have been working with the City of Gilbert on suggestions and ideas for the design for a third, new Gilbert recharge pond. It has just been opened to the public at Higley and Ocotillo Roads.

While not a maze of winding paths around oval effluent recharge basins, it contains lush, newly planted Goodings Willows and Fremont Cottonwoods along the margins of each of its rectangular ponds. This is similar to Gilbert's highly productive rectangular recharge ponds at Neely Road. The rectangular design is more efficient for groundwater recharge maintenance purposes.

While one might speculate that the rectangular shape would not be as productive as Gilbert's Greenfield Road ponds, old-timers in Maricopa Audubon fondly remember the City of Phoenix' rectangular wastewater ponds at 35th Avenue and the Salt River. There was hardly a day there, summer and winter, that wasn't exciting for shorebirds, waterfowl, and gulls. Furthermore, those ponds didn't have trees!

Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

The idea for this photo quiz was conceived in February of 2006 when I was the first birder to set out orange slices to attract the Streak-backed Oriole which has famously spent the past two winters at the Gilbert Riparian Area. Having successfully photographed that bird on oranges, I realized I had images on citrus of eight of the nine oriole species possible in North America. I also tallied up eleven different species that I have photographed on the oranges which everyone now sets out at GRA, the strangest surely being Abert's Towhee, a seed eater not known for exposing itself while feeding.

There's no doubt, though, that our three quiz birds are orioles, one of three branches of the icterid family tree. In two of the three photos note the bold black markings, and all three birds display the sturdy, sharply pointed oriole bill and the strong, thick icterid legs which allow them to feed both on the ground and by hanging acrobatically from branches to forage arboreally.

Typically oriole identification is straightforward. When we see a boldly patterned male in the context of location and season, there's no problem. Females, though, can be quite problematical, especially if out of season or out of range. And all the moreso because we rarely see two species together for comparison and because we have become so attuned to identifying orioles by plumage rather than jizz. These points were dramatically proven in the fall of '05 when the Streak-backed was originally identified and posted as a Hooded. Let's see how we do here without the benefit of our orioles' wonderful colors, especially with the one bird that is obviously a female.

A) – Good photo, easy bird

Well, perhaps not so easy! The black face and throat tell us this oriole is a male, but before we anoint it a Hooded, let's not forget that the first year males of two species, Orchard and Spot-breasted, have less extensive black on their head and body than fully adults males, and three other species, Streak-backed, Bullock's, and Altamira, show a face and throat pattern very similar to Hooded. Keep in mind, also, that in two of our oriole species, Spot-breasted and Altamira, males and females show little difference in plumage.

Let's eliminate Spot-breasted because that south Florida specialty has entirely dark greater wing coverts and in this photo we can see a white wingbar and white covert edgings. Let's eliminate young Orchard because the jizz is wrong-

-Orchards are small, compact orioles, noticeably short-tailed and short-billed, and our quiz bird is thin, long, and lanky, and its tail seems particularly long relative to body length.

Bullock's? Bullock's would show a black eyeline and at least some black on the crown. Altamira? The Altamira bill is shorter and thicker than this with a nearly all black lower mandible. So, we've come down to Streak-backed and we can't see this bird's back. Hooded males have a dark back with pale feather edgings, quite different from the Streak-backed's light back with dark streaks. Streak-backeds, though, are shorter tailed than Hoodeds, more robust of body, and have a heavier, uncurved bill with a more extensive pale lower mandible, dark only at the very tip. Bill and body jizz tell us this is, indeed, a Hooded Oriole. It was a yellow, first spring male, photographed on South Padre Island, Texas in April, 2004.

B) – Bad photo, easy bird

This photo was taken in partial shade with the subject's lower body obscured by branches and contorted to access the orange. It is difficult to get a sense of the bird's jizz, and of course we can't discern tail length at all. The black cowl, however, establishes for us that the bird is a male, and the overall plumage pattern of darks and lights should make identification easy.

In four of our oriole species, fully adult males have an entirely black head as shown on our second quiz bird, but in three of those four the black encompasses the entire neck and extends down the back. On this oriole we can see an obvious line of demarcation between the head and the back. This pattern eliminates Baltimore Oriole, orange with a black head and back, Orchard Oriole, chestnut with a black head and back, and Scott's Oriole, yellow with a black head and back.

This second photograph was not taken in Arizona, nor could it have been as there are no Arizona records for Audubon's Oriole, a south Texas specialty. Though not as bright as our lemon yellow Scott's, Audubon's Oriole is a spectacular yellow and black lower Rio Grande Valley bird, usually described as having a green back offset by a yellow collar. It is a shy bird not easily found even in areas where it is known to occur, and seen from beneath, as a flyover, might easily be mistaken for a Scott's by an Arizona birder. This Audubon's Oriole was photographed at the DeWind's in Salineno, Texas in December, 1999. Don't forget there are a few records, from both southern Arizona and south Texas, of Black-vented

Oriole, another yellow and black oriole, a vagrant from Mexico, which could easily be passed off as a Scott's because of the extensive black on its back.

C) – Photo, difficult bird

Here's an oriole shape with no black except for the shadows of some overhanging foliage, and if you've been following the clues you know it was photographed in Arizona. That eliminates the Texas and Florida specialties and leaves us with six female possibilities. Without color and side by side comparisons it may be impossible to identify this oriole to species, but let's give it a try.

Let's start by noting that the entire bill is light and the back looks to be uniformly colored and unstreaked. These two features would eliminate female Streak-backed, and the latter would eliminate female Scott's which has heavier, darker streaking than our other female orioles. We can discern wingbars, but this bird looks a bit disheveled, and unfortunately the tail seems obscured by foliage so we can't use tail length to help us with overall jizz. We're left to decide between Bullock's, Baltimore (yes, one shows up almost annually somewhere in Arizona), Hooded, and Orchard (yes, these too show up occasionally in Arizona), and we don't have much help.

Without the benefit of color and with no size comparison with any other bird, I don't believe it is possible to narrow the identification of this female oriole any further. This is the female Orchard Oriole which spent a few weeks at the Gilbert Riparian Area last fall. When originally seen, the bird was almost tailless, so what you see of the tail in this photo is all the bird had. Presumably when its tail grew in it continued its southward migration. Original identification was made by jizz and color.

Orchard is our smallest oriole, and with its short bill and tail is hardly larger than, and often mistaken for, a female warbler. Female Orchards typically appear greener overall than other female orioles, and the GRA female was no exception. It was a compact, greenish-yellow, generic oriole, and the difficulty identifying it with a good photo simply shows the care needed with any out-of-season oriole you see in Arizona. You could be looking at an out-of-range bird to add to your state list, or you could be looking at an out-of-this-world vagrant to add to your life list. The next Black-vented is a bit overdue and there was one in south Texas last year. Do your homework.

Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

DECEMBER, JANUARY,
& FEBRUARY 2007

The Black-bellied Whistling-Duck, the Fulvous Whistling-Duck, and the Ross's Goose remained at Chaparral Park and/or McCormick Ranch Lake in Scottsdale through the period and at least until mid-March (m.ob.). Another Black-bellied Whistling-Duck was reported at the Tres Rios Hayfield Site Feb. 9 – 27 (MSc,AC). Three Ross's Geese were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC (fide KR). A Greater White-fronted Goose was seen at McCormick Ranch Lake and Scottsdale Pavilions ponds Jan. 1 – Feb. 11 (PD) and three were reported with 80 Canada Geese at a pond at the n.w. corner of Power and Guadalupe Roads Jan. 27 (GR). Another Greater White-fronted Goose was found in Sun City West during the Phoenix Area Aquatic Bird Survey (PAABS) on Jan. 20 (CBe).

The Cackling Goose found in late October, remained at Estrella Mountain Ranch at least until Feb. 25 (m.ob.). Three additional Cackling Geese and several Lesser Canada Geese were observed among the many Canada Geese at McCormick Ranch and the pond near Hayden and Scottsdale Road Jan. 6 – 9 (TC,PD). Another Cackling Goose was photo documented in Goodyear on Jan. 20 during the PAABS (MH).

An immature Trumpeter or Tundra Swan was observed east of the confluence of the Gila and Hassayampa Rivers from mid-December until at least Jan. 27 (ML,RWz,TC et al.). Four white swans (probably Tundra Swans) were seen flying over Camelback Rd. and 44th St. Feb. 1 (CBa). Tundra Swan is only a casual winter visitor to the county and there has been no previous record of a Trumpeter Swan. Individual female Wood Ducks were seen at Rio Salado Dec. 9 – 23 (TB) and at the Tres Rios Hayfield Site Dec. 9 at least to Jan. 22 (TC,JJ,DY).

At least four Eurasian Wigeons wintered at ponds in Scottsdale: one was recorded

at Rio Verde during the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), a female was seen at the Paradise Cemetery pond Dec. 19 – 21 (KR), a male was observed at the Camelback Golf Club pond Dec. 25 – Jan. 14 (DSj et al.), and another male was found at McCormick Ranch and Hayden Rd. ponds Dec. 9 into March (TC,PD,MM). Another male was found in Sun City West on Jan. 20 during the PAABS (CBe). A hybrid Eurasian Wigeon was also reported at McCormick Ranch Dec. 9 – Feb. 11 (TC,PD). Between one and three "Mexican" Mallards continued to be seen at Rio Salado during the period (TB,TGs,PD,TC) and one was reported at the Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR) Dec. 15 (MM).

Four Blue-winged Teal were observed at GWR Dec. 7 – 15 (MM,KE) and an unusually high number of 20 were counted at Tres Rios Dec. 17 (TC,JJ); the species is usually considered rare to uncommon from late November to early February. Greater Scaup wintered at the ASU Research Park pond as it has done for the past five years: between one and three males were seen there Dec. 16 – Jan. 20 (PD,TC) and two pairs were reported there Jan. 5 to Feb. 18 (MSc). One Greater Scaup was recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC). Common Goldeneyes were more common than usual: a high of 22 were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), two were seen at the Gilbert Rd. pond s. of Ocotillo Dec. 25 (DPe), ten were counted in Chandler Jan. 21 (DPe), one was seen at the Gila Bend Sewage Pond Jan. 20 (CBa,SS), and two were reported at the Gila Bend Power Plant Jan. 3 (ES).

Until about eight or nine years ago, Hooded Merganser was considered to be an uncommon winter visitor to the county. However, winter numbers have been increasing every year since then. This winter, during the PAABS, a total of 94 were counted, including 30 on ponds and lakes in Chandler and Sun Lakes (TC), at least seven at the Scottsdale Pavilions ponds, seven more on ponds in Gilbert,

and the species was recorded on all four local Christmas Counts (m.ob.). Red-breasted Merganser is still an uncommon winter visitor, so of interest were three observed at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Dec. 2, with one remaining at least to Dec. 27 (TC et al.); another individual was reported at Coon Bluff Jan. 7 – Feb. 4 (JWe).

The Horned Grebe (at the Lower River Rd. ponds since late November) remained only until Dec. 24; a second one was found there Dec. 14 (TC,PD,DPe,KR). A Horned Grebe was reported on Canyon Lake Dec. 9 (MW). One Horned Grebe was observed on Saguaro Lake with two Clark's Grebes, 352 Western Grebes, and 640 Eared Grebes on Jan. 22 (TC). On Lake Pleasant, 410 Western Grebes were counted on Jan. 12 (TC). Between eight and 24 Am. White Pelicans were reported on Gilbert area ponds from Dec. 25 to Jan. 20 (DPe,TC) and 250 were counted at Painted Rock Dam Jan. 12 (PS).

An Am. Bittern was found wintering again at Rio Salado where it was observed from Dec. 16 to Feb. 11 (TGs,MSc,PD,JM). A Least Bittern, heard calling by Saguaro Lake Jan. 22, provided a new winter location in the state for this species (TC). At the Great Blue Heronry at Price and Queen Creek Rd. in Chandler, on the early date of Jan. 20, there was at least one nest containing five to six week old nestlings, which means that eggs were laid in mid to late November (TC). Another large Great Blue Heronry was observed by Saguaro Lake Jan. 22 (TC). Black-crowned Night-Herons were seen carrying nesting material at Rio Salado Feb. 17 (TGs).

A possible immature (or hybrid) Glossy Ibis was discovered at Rio Salado Jan. 20 – Feb. 16 (TGs,TB,JH); there have been only two previous county records. Large numbers of White-faced Ibis wintered in s.w. Phoenix (as they have for the past seven years); about 300 were counted w. of Buckeye Dec. 24 (TC,DPe).

Bald Eagles were found in some areas where they are not usually seen; an adult was observed at Tempe Town Lake Dec. 20 & Jan. 20 (TH,DSu), an adult was seen e. of the confluence of the Hassayampa and Gila Rivers Dec. 24 (KR,RWz), two adults were photographed at McCormick Ranch Jan. 24 (BR), and a juvenile was reported at McCormick Ranch and w. of Hayden in Scottsdale from Jan. 29 to Feb. 16 (TC,JH,FI). A migrating Com. Black-Hawk was observed near the Ballentine Trail off Hwy. 87 on the early date of Feb. 23 (BZ); there were no previous February records for the county.

One of the Red-shouldered Hawks at the Hassayampa River Preserve was seen there Dec. 16 (VM). One or two Zone-tailed Hawks have been found in winter in the county for the past seven years; this winter three individuals were reported: an immature at GWR Dec. 19 & Jan. 6 (RWr,JBu), an adult found w. of Seven Springs during the Carefree CBC Jan. 2 (CR,GL,TL fide WT), and an adult in Chandler Jan. 20 (TC). Two Crested Caracaras were discovered at 309th Ave. in s.w. Phoenix Dec. 16 (JJ) and another individual was found at GWR Feb. 19 (JBe).

Between one and two Am. Avocets were reported at GWR Jan. 25 – 31 (MM). Two Lesser Yellowlegs (rare in winter) were recorded on the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 19 (fide DY) and one was observed w. of Buckeye Dec. 24 (TC,DPO). Long-billed Curlews are becoming more common in winter in s.w. Phoenix: 12 were seen there Dec. 24 (TC,DPO), 50 on Jan. 10 (MM,DPe), and 25 on Jan. 27 (SBu,GM,RWz). A Western Sandpiper (rare in winter) was observed at the Gila Bend sewage ponds Jan. 20 (CBa,SS).

An immature Lesser Black-backed Gull was discovered at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Dec. 10 – 16 (BGro et al.), providing the first record for Arizona. A first winter Herring Gull (a casual winter visitor) was found at the Lower River Rd. ponds Dec. 9 – 12

(KR,DPO) and a second winter Herring Gull was observed on Saguaro Lake Jan. 22 (TC). Nine Ruddy Ground-Doves were found during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 19 (TH,CF) near 121st Ave., s. of Southern in Avondale, where they wintered in record numbers a year ago. Eighteen were counted there Jan. 27 (TC) and the number dwindled to three at the end of the period (m.ob.).

Burrowing Owls were observed near the 16th St. parking area of Rio Salado Feb. 3 (TGs). A Long-eared Owl, a rare winter visitor, was found in the Salt/Verde CBC area Dec. 14 (fide KR). Individual N. Saw-whet Owls were discovered in a Tempe yard Jan. 3 – 12 (RB et al.) and in Fountain Hills Jan. 13 – Feb. 25 (S&CW,KR); another individual was heard calling e. of Roosevelt Lake in Gila Co. Feb. 6 (JY).

A Broad-billed Hummingbird, as well as the hybrid Broad-billed x Violet-crowned Hummingbird, remained through the period into March at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (m.ob.). An adult male Broad-tailed Hummingbird, probably an early migrant, was found at Rio Salado Feb. 24 (TGs,TB). A Lewis's Woodpecker, discovered at Estrella Mt. Ranch Dec. 9, remained at least until Jan. 27 (DPO,KR et al.). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, at BTA since mid-November, remained at least to Feb. 25 (m.ob.). A Red-breasted Sapsucker was found at Coon Bluff Feb. 4 (S&CW).

Individual "Western" type Flycatchers, rare in winter, were found near Robbin's Butte on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (TC), and on the Carefree CBC Jan. 2 (TS,JG). Individual Eastern Phoebe were discovered along the Verde River at Fort McDowell Dec. 14 (RWD et al.) and at the Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP) Jan. 5 (MSt). Individual Bell's Vireos, rare in winter, were found at Rio Salado Dec. 11 – 23 (TGs) and at GWR Jan. 9 – Feb. 14 (RWr,PM). Individual Cassin's Vireos, uncommon in winter, were observed along the lower Verde River Dec. 9 (TC)

and along the Salt River at 91st Ave. Dec. 16 (TC,JJ).

Tree Swallows formerly were considered to be rare in December and January. Winter numbers have been increasing during the past five years. A few were reported at the Lower River Rd. ponds and Rio Salado in December (PD,TG) and a high number of 34 were recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (BGro). N. Rough-winged Swallows, formerly considered to be uncommon in December and January, have been wintering in greater numbers and in more areas. During this past winter, numbers were reported at McCormick Ranch, GWR, and on both the Salt/Verde and Gila River CBC (m.ob.). During the past six years, Cliff Swallow have been arriving earlier and are now being seen in early February; this year the first one was reported at GWR on Feb. 10 (PD).

Bridled Titmice are irregular winter wanderers to lower elevations, so of interest were the 23 that were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR). A Brown Creeper, an uncommon winter visitor in the lowlands, was observed at Whitlow Dam in Pinal Co. Dec. 7 (JBa). Four Winter Wrens, rare winter visitors, were discovered during the Carefree CBC Jan. 2: two in Lower Camp Creek and two along upper Seven Springs Wash (TC). Also rare in winter, two Golden-crowned Kinglets were found during the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR) and one was observed at the HRP Jan. 5 (MSt).

Two Townsend's Solitaires, irregular in the lowlands, were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR). The Rufous-backed Robin, at the HRP since early November, remained at least until Dec. 22 (m.ob.) and another Rufous-backed Robin was found during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 19 (JJ). Two more Rufous-backed Robins were discovered in Pinal Co. during the period: one at Whitlow Dam Dec. 7 (JBa) and one at

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Field Observations

Continued from page 13

BTA Dec. 24 – Jan. 24 (EP et al.). The Brown Thrasher, at BTA since November, remained into March (m.ob.). Locations of Bendire's Thrashers are always of interest: a singing male was seen and heard at Rio Salado between 7th and 16th Streets, one block south of the river Feb. 3 (TGs).

A first year female N. Parula was found along the Salt River at 91st Ave. Dec. 16 (TC, JJ). The Yellow Warbler, at GWR since mid-November, remained at least until Jan. 17 (PM, TC, RWR); two other individuals were found at Chaparral Park in Scottsdale Dec. 1 (DPo) and in Chandler Jan. 13 (TC). The female Chestnut-sided Warbler, at Rio Salado since Nov. 11, remained at least until Feb. 25 (TB, PD). Another Chestnut-sided Warbler was found along the Verde River Dec. 14 (TC). Two Townsend's Warblers, discovered along Lower Camp Creek Jan. 2 during the Carefree CBC, provided the most northern winter record in Arizona (TC).

A Palm Warbler, a casual winter visitor, was discovered w. of 7th Ave. at Rio Salado Jan. 28 – Feb. 16 (PD et al.). Individual Black-and-white Warblers were found along the lower Salt River during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 19 (TC) and along the Verde River near Box Bar Jan. 5 (CM). A MacGillivray's Warbler, rare in winter, was discovered at BTA Jan. 16 (RWI). A male Hooded Warbler, a casual winter visitor, was observed at the Wickenburg Rest Stop along the Hassayampa River Dec. 12 (RS, DG). A female Wilson's Warbler, a rare winter visitor, was found at GWR Dec. 11 (MPo). The Summer Tanager, that returned to a Tempe neighborhood in October, remained through the period into March (BE).

Individual "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows were reported on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), at GWR Dec. 20 into March (EH, PD et al.), at Paloma Jan. 20 (CBa, SS), and at Butcher Jones Beach, Saguaro Lake Jan. 24 (RM). Two were seen at Devil's Canyon, n. of BTA Dec.

31 (EH). Individual Swamp Sparrows were found w. of 7th St. at Rio Salado Dec. 23 (TGs) and at Camp Creek during the Carefree CBC Jan. 2 (DD). The Harris's Sparrow, at GWR since early November, remained into March (m.ob.); two were reported there Dec. 15 (MM). A White-throated Sparrow was found in a Mesa yard Dec. 6 & Feb. 24 (JM).

The male Lapland Longspur, discovered at the Rousseau Sod Farm in October, was found there again Dec. 7 (RWd, BD, LH, AV). Between one and two Chestnut-collared Longspurs were observed at the Rousseau Sod Farm Dec. 9 – 10 (MSc et al.) and one was reported e. of the confluence of the Hassayampa and Gila Rivers Dec. 26 (KR, RWz). A Black-headed Grosbeak, rare in winter, was discovered in Box Canyon, Mineral Mts. in Pinal Co. Dec. 30 (MPII).

An unusually large group of 1000 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were observed at the Gilbert Rd., s. of Ocotillo pond Jan. 6 (DPe). Orchard Oriole is usually considered to be a rare winter visitor, but this winter, no fewer than three were discovered: a male at a n.e. Mesa feeder (LF), a female photographed at Tres Rios Dec. 24 (BGri), and a male photographed in Surprise Dec. 28 (DB). The Streak-backed Oriole, observed at GWR since early October, was still present in early March (m.ob.).

A Cassin's Finch and a Pine Siskin, irregular winter visitors, were found during the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR). The only Lawrence's Goldfinches reported during the period were two at Rio Verde Feb. 26 (TM). Two Am. Goldfinches, uncommon winter visitors, were observed at GWR Dec. 31 (PM) and one was seen at Rio Salado Feb. 17 (TGs, TB).

Noteworthy species discovered on the Lower Colorado River during the period were a Long-tailed Duck at Parker Dam Dec. 9 at least to Feb. 14 (CBa, SS et al.), a Red-throated Loon at Bill

Williams Delta Dec. 9 at least to Dec. 26 (CBa, SS et al.), between one and two Red-necked Grebes at Bill Williams Delta and Lake Havasu Dec. 23 – Feb. 22 (TGo, SBa, RWI), and another Red-necked Grebe at Davis Dam Jan. 25 (TC). A Couch's Kingbird, discovered near Tacna Jan. 11 and staying at least into March (PL, m.ob.), represented the first record for Arizona.

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m.ob.), Phoenix Area Aquatic Bird Survey (PAABS).

Observers: Charles Babbitt (CBa), Steve Barlow (SBa), Jack Bartley (JBa), Jason Beaman (JBe), Carol Beardmore (CBe), Ron Bimrose, David Bradford, Terry Brodner, Scott Burge (SBu), Jim Burns (JBu), Andrew Core, Troy Corman, Donnie Dann, Bix Demaree, Pierre Deviche, Kreg Ellzey, Brian Enos, Lisa Fetter, Craig Fischer, Tom Gaskill (TGs), Dennis Ghiglieri, Tony Godfrey (TGo), Brandon Grise (BGri), Bill Grossi (BGro), John Gunn, Liz Hatcher, Melonie Herring, Tom Hildebrandt, Jack Holloway, Eric Hough, Frank Insana, Justin Jones, Mark Larson, Paul Lehman, Grant Loomis, Tyler Loomis, Garret Majlinger, James McKay, Connie McNeill, Thomas Magarian, Vanessa Montgomery, Michael Moore, Robert Mortensen, Pete Moulton, Dave Pearson (DPe), E. Peiker, Michael Plagens (MPI), Molly Pollock (MPo), Dave Powell (DPo), Kurt Radamaker, Brett Reichard, Gwen Robinson, Carlos Ross, Peter Salmon, Sig Stangeland, Myron Scott (MSc), Dave Stejskal (DSj), Mark Stevenson (MSt), Rose Strickland, Ed Strong, Diana Stuart (DSu), Tice Supplee, Walter Thurbur, Anita Van Auken, Magill Weber, John Weser (JWe), Russ Widner (RWd), Rick Wilt (RWI), Robert Witzeman (RWz), Rick Wright (RWR), Sarah & Chauncey Wood, John Yarger, Bob Zavec.

Carefree Christmas Bird Count Summary – January 2, 2007 by Walter Thurber (compiler) The 15th annual Carefree Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, January 2, 2007. Some 89 field observers and 14 feeder watchers teamed up to find 105 species and 14,480 individual birds. The species total equaled our second best record and the individual count was second best as well. Our numbers are holding up nicely despite the Cave Creek Complex Fire that ravaged nearly one-fourth of our count area in June 2005.

New species for the count were a Zone-tailed Hawk near Seven Springs and two Townsend's Warblers at Lower Camp Creek. This brings our cumulative total to 158 species. Other notable finds included a Western Flycatcher at the Jewel of the Creek Preserve and a Swamp Sparrow at the Sears Kay Ranch. Peach-faced Lovebird was a no-show for the sixth consecutive year, although one individual visited a Carefree feeder on January 20, 2007.

Record high counts were established for 17 species. Gambel's Quail was once again our most abundant bird. Last year Carefree had the national high count for this species plus Harris's Hawk, Gilded Flicker, Cactus Wren, Rock Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher and Black-throated Sparrow. We gathered at the Satisfied Frog Restaurant for our compilation dinner.

This year our area leaders were Doug Alexander, Harvey Beatty, Diane Berney, Greg Clark, Troy Corman, Tara Deck, Cynthia Donald, Andrea Ouse and Tice Supplee. Many Maricopa Audubon members participated in the count and your help was very much appreciated.

Base & Meridian Wildlife Area – Gila River: February 10, 2007 by Tom Hildebrandt--Eleven MAS members traveled to the AZ Game and Fish B&M Wildlife Area and the day started cloudy and cool but warmed nicely by late morning. Birding was perhaps a little slow, but a nice list was collected by the end of the morning. The group also visited the "Initial Point" of the Township and Range Coordinate system

at the top of nearby Monument Hill, and checked both the 121st Ave. & Southern Ruddy Dove location and El Mirage Pond without success in finding the ruddys. The day list included 43 species.

Mesquite Wash – A February 24th outing drew seven people to Mesquite Wash to find the willow leaf beetle. Puddles had frozen overnight and icicles formed at the springs that support a healthy columbine patch. Despite the chill we found a wildflower in bloom, the fascinating *Corydalis aurea*. It has a bright yellow flowers with a bilaterally symmetrical perianth. It is a relative of poppies but is now generally split off into the family Fumariaceae. Red Barberry had bright



Photo by Mike Plagens

yellow buds ready to burst open any day.

The best bird was a singing Hutton's Vireo that stayed close for an extended look. Abundant ruby-crowned kinglets allowed excellent comparison to the vireo. A small flock of American Robins were also noted. We were most saddened by the increasing negative impact that unregulated visitors are having on the area. The most egregious was a mad chain saw wielder who had blatantly chopped down healthy riparian trees. (Mike Plagens contributed to this article.)

Sonoita Creek Natural Area – Friday, April 30. Ten birders enjoyed the birding expertise of Ranger Bill Adler and the botanizing of Big Tree Registry Coordinator and Ranger Ken Morrow for nearly 7 miles in this transition zone between Sonoran and Chihuahua desert. A broad expanse of the conservation

area was seen after we emerged from a veritable ocotillo forest in the adjacent State Trust Land. The green cottonwood/willow ribbon marked where Sonoita Creek escapes the Patagonia Lake Dam. Mounts Wrightson and Hopkins loomed past the Grosvenor hills to the north, the Atascosa's, home to Edward Abbey for a season, dominated the western horizon. Black throated, Brewers, Vespers and Chipping Sparrows were seen in the uplands marked by grasses, cane cholla, mesquites, One-seed Juniper and Schott's Agave. Lucy's Warblers were singing everywhere and a lone Black Vulture was soaring. Enormous Velvet Mesquite, Arizona Walnut and Netleaf Hackberry along with cottonwood and

four willow species provided dense canopy creek side. A pair of Zone Tailed Hawks chasing away a trespassing Swainsons Hawk was quite a sight. One person saw the Zonies touch beaks in flight after their success. Gray Hawks were paired up and vocalizing. Other riparian sightings were Orange Crowned, Yellow, Wilsons and Yellow-rumped Warblers, White-throated Swift, Violet-green Swallow, Cassin's Kingbird, White-breasted Nuthatch, Broad-billed Hummer and Hermit Thrush. Another 30 species were added to our count as we walked along the east end of Patagonia Lake after lunch. Hutton's, Warbling and Plumbeous Vireos, Barn Swallow, Ruby-crowned Kinglet and Vermillion Flycatchers were all

seen along with numerous sightings of seemingly tame Coues deer. We totaled 71 species. Missing were the Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Elegant Trogon and mating mountain lions reported earlier. The beauty of the area was marred by the despoiling by overgrazing. Mesquites and much bare soil displaced native grasses in the uplands, exotic poison hemlock dominated the damp areas on the east end of the lake. Cow pies were ubiquitous, hoof ruts and eroded channels marked the wetlands and cows themselves were foraging and bellowing along the riparian corridor. Already a birders paradise, the improvement if management shifts from the State Trust to the State Parks department could be remarkable, if Parks is fully funded.

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/.

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. 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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For Wren-dition subscriptions only--\$20/year (Make your check payable to "Maricopa Audubon Society") and send to Mark Horlings at 334 W Palm Lane, Phoenix, AZ 85003. For Summer/Winter address change or to freeze your membership in our chapter call Membership chair, Jack Follett at 480-897-7988 or jackfollett@msn.com.

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

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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Maricopa Audubon Board

PRESIDENT

Herb Fibel
 1128 E Geneva Dr.
 Tempe, AZ 85282
 480-966-5246
herbertsfibel@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Robin Silver
 PO Box 39382
 Phoenix, AZ 85069-9382
 602-246-4170
rsilver@biologicaldiversity.org

SECRETARY

Maureen Stewart
 1846 E Grandview St.
 Mesa, AZ 85203
 480-898-7239
maureen.stewart@yahoo.com

TREASURER

Mark Horlings
 334 W Palm Ln.
 Phoenix, AZ 85003
 602-279-2238
mhorlings@cox.net

FIELD TRIPS

Laurie Nessel
 1632 E. Cedar St.
 Tempe, AZ 85281-5906
 480-968-5614
laurienessel@hotmail.com

PUBLICITY

Fred Stewart
 1846 E Grandview St.
 Mesa, AZ 85203
 480-898-7239
fspescador@yahoo.com

CONSERVATION

Robert Witzeman
 4619 E. Arcadia Ln.
 Phoenix, AZ 85018
 602-840-0052
witzeman@cox.net

PROGRAMS

Cynthia Donald
 2042 E. Balboa Dr.
 Tempe, AZ 85282
 480-283-4515
planres@earthlink.net

MEMBERSHIP

John F "Jack" Follett
 1520 E Secretariat Dr.
 Tempe, AZ 85284
 480-897-7988
 cell 602-319-3071
jackfollett@msn.com

EDUCATION

Mark Larson
 17212 N Scottsdale Rd.,
 #1182
 Scottsdale, AZ 85255
 480-474-4439
 cell 570-768-9095
larsonwarren@gmail.com

EDITOR

Deva Burns
 7709 E 4th St.
 Scottsdale, AZ 85251-4524
 480-946-2502
devaburns@aol.com

Audubon Online

see us on the Web at:

<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>

Maricopa Audubon Society

P.O. Box 15451
 Phoenix, AZ 85060-5451



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