



The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LVIII, No. 1

Spring 2008



Adult Reeve

Maricopa Audubon Meetings and Programs Feb. 2008-May 2008

Cynthia Donald

Please join us for another exciting year of speakers covering a wide range of topics – African predators, condors, cranes, birds of Alaska, Fossil Creek, Cape May 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 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 Rolling Hills (formerly 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 average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

Program Schedule for 2008

February 5, 2008

Tyler Loomis The Cape May Experience

March 4, 2008

Joe Yarchin Watchable Wildlife Program

April 1, 2008

Kurt Rademaker Baja Birding
MAS Elections

May 6, 2008

Kathy Sullivan Condors!

Program Summary

February 5, 2008

Tyler Loomis The Cape May Experience
Maricopa Audubon sponsored Tyler Loomis, an enthusiastic 13-year old birder, for an October ABA bird camp entitled "The Cape May Experience." The camp is for young birders, from 14 to 18 years of age. Tyler has been a birdwatcher for 5 years and has assisted with CBC's over the past 2 years. Join us as he presents a program on his personal Cape May experience.

Committees/Support

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

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

Jim and I spent the winter holidays in the Orlando area and, unbelievably enough though flying Continental, had no horror stories (insert your own Continental jokes here)! Jim spent the days I went to Disney on Canoe Creek Road south of Kissimmee. Waiting 75 minutes in line for a 60 second ride is about as boring for him as it is for me to sit around watching him wait for birds to jump in front of his lens.

Christmas morning we parked at the edge of Lake Kissimmee and watched two Whooping Cranes in the preliminary stages of their mating ritual. What was truly amazing is that they were only about 25 feet away. Being that close impressed upon me how large and majestic these birds are.

Another morning we took an airboat ride with a great guide, Rob Murchie, from the Overstreet Road boat ramp. Among other species, we saw a pair of Snail Kites, Limpkins, and nesting Bald Eagles. Did you know Lake Kissimmee has the highest concentration of Bald Eagles in the lower forty-eight? It was a great surprise to me

how smooth an airboat ride is and how close one can get to the wildlife despite the noise of the motor going to a specific area.

After we arrived home, I made suet (from the recipe I shared with you in the Fall issue). We haven't had anything unusual at the suet, but we've had White-crowned Sparrows, a Lincoln Sparrow, Abert's Towhees, Curve-billed Thrashers, Gila Woodpeckers. Unfortunately, the "ten minute wonder" Gray Catbird we had before Thanksgiving hasn't returned.

Did you participate in any Christmas Bird Counts? The only one I was able to do was Rocky Point. Bird numbers were disappointing, but the people were great. Several of us went down together and had a great weekend.

I hope you enjoy all the articles. Every contributor works hard to provide content for each issue. Believe me, without their help, the Wrendition would not exist. So, here's a BIG thank you for everyone who has ever sent in something for the newsletter.



Adult Reeve in basic plumage, photographed by Pete Moulton at the Gilbert Water Ranch, AZ, October, 2007, with Canon 20D body and Canon 100-400mm IS USM lens.

This edition's "Meanderings" is all about birds, which should come as no surprise.

I sold my home in Tempe about six months ago, and moved nearby to a second floor apartment, right behind the ten story National Bank of Arizona Building, which I can see from my apartment's little patio/balcony. At this writing I have a "seen from the apartment" species list of 27 birds. I have always felt that the bank building would be a perfect observation spot for a Peregrine Falcon, so I was elated, but hardly surprised, when one showed up on January 9th. She hung around until the 12th and was nowhere to be found on the 13th. After I had given up all hope of spotting her again, she reappeared late in the afternoon. I was thrilled the day before when a second Peregrine, obviously a male, appeared on the scene late in the afternoon, and repeatedly soared over the building and around the female. At one point she even launched off the building and joined him for a little aerobatics. At another time, he briefly lowered his legs, not unlike a plane lowering its landing gear, right in front of her. It was sheer joy watching the antics of these two unusual birds.

Several weeks earlier, on the 22nd of December, I flew to Houston, and then to Corpus Christi, Texas, where I rented a car and drove the twenty-five miles or so to the Rockport-Fulton area on the Gulf of Mexico. A large bay is formed there by Padre Island. I checked in to my most pleasant motel/hotel, where full breakfasts were included in the room rate. At 7:00 the following morning I drove the few blocks to the Fulton Harbor, purchased my boat ticket and boarded the 25 passenger harbor cruise ship called "The Skimmer" for the cruise over to the Aransas NWR to see the wintering Whooping Cranes.

Tommy Moore is both the owner and captain. I asked him if there would be anyone on board who would be able to point out

the various bird species we encountered. Captain Tommy modestly replied that there was usually someone on board who knew most of the birds. Indeed there were several such people on board, but the best birder of all turned out to be Captain Tommy himself, who, over his speaker, not only identified and directed our binoculars to every bird species we saw, but knew and related to his passengers the life history of every one of the Whooping Cranes we encountered. Another big plus was that his boat had a very shallow draught that enabled us to get right up close to shore in the shallow waters of the bay. Up top the wind was biting cold when we were moving along at a fast clip, so most of the passengers sought the shelter of the windowed lower deck, and stayed as close as possible to the coffee urn. Once we stopped, though, or slowed down for a close view, it was delightful to climb up the steps to the observation deck. Two scopes were set up, and everyone who wanted to was able to get close up looks at the special species.

There were armadas of both White and Brown Pelicans constantly flying by. Many Laughing and Ring-billed Gulls were circling along with a few of the smaller Franklin Gulls. Caspian, Royal and Forster's Terns were interspersed. The only duck species that we saw that we don't have here was the Mottled Duck.

Many shore birds and wading birds were spotted. Among those that we seldom see in our area were Wilson's Snipe, White Ibis, Reddish Egret, Long-billed Curlew, Sandhill Crane, American Oystercatcher, and one of my target species for the day, the Roseate Spoonbill. Black Vultures were well represented among the Turkey Vultures, and exciting birds of prey spotted were Osprey, Crested Caracara, Northern Harrier and a Peregrine Falcon, which had taken up residence on a sandbar island at our last

stop for the day. And then there were the Whooping Cranes, about 20 in all, in small family groups. Captain Tommy told us that the Whoopers we had seen this day represented about 4% of the total world's population of this species both in the wild and in captivity.

I thawed out after the four hour tour with a piping hot bowl of oyster stew at Charlotte Plummer's Seafood Restaurant right there at the Fulton Pier.

The following day I drove up to Aransas. It is a fascinating place. Among the little known facts about Aransas NWR is that it is home to about 500 alligators. I got to see a huge one in the pond next to the visitor center. It was in mid-afternoon when I got there and the birds were kind of quiet. There are a number of trails and boardwalks that one can follow providing access to a number of different types of habitat, and a tall, wheelchair accessible observation tower, from the top of which in winter one can usually catch sight of a couple of Whooping Cranes, but I didn't see any. I did see a big family of White-tailed Deer crossing the road as I left the refuge, and on the road back to Fulton, several thousand squawking Sandhill Cranes flew over in long lines, heading back to their nightly roosting sites.

The last day of my visit I drove out to the Padre Island National Seashore. It was a joy to identify on my own many of the wintering shorebirds along the almost deserted beaches. Species that I was able to identify were Black-bellied, Semipalmated and Snowy Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Willet, Sanderling, and Long-billed Curlew.

I arrived home in time to participate in the Gila River and Carefree CBCs. I hope your Holiday birding season was as exciting and productive as mine was.

http://www.birdrockport.com/bird_tours.htm

Meetings and Programs Feb. 2008 - May 2008 cont.

March 4, 2008

Joe Yarchin AGFD Watchable Wildlife Program

Did you know that the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) owns or manages over 266,800 acres in the State, including 23 Wildlife Areas? Joe is the coordinator for the AGFD's Watchable Wildlife Program. Come and find out about that program, the updated Watchable Wildlife book and the expanded version of the Herps Guide, all valuable information for anyone who enjoys sharing the outdoors with its inhabitants.

April 1, 2008

Kurt Radamaker Baja Birding

Been birding in Mexico? Been to Baja?

Think there's not much there except sand and scrub? Think again! Come and experience Baja birding as you never imagined it could be! Kurt not only hosts our web page, but is very active in AZFO (Arizona Field Ornithologists), Christmas Bird Counts, and is an exceptional birder.

MAS Elections

May 6, 2008

Kathy Sullivan Condors!

Kathy is the California Condor Program Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. She has also worked on the Whooping Crane and Sandhill Crane Recovery Projects, monitored Spotted

Owls and Goshawks in Arizona, sea turtles in Florida and engaged in marine mammal research in Mexico. Kathy will discuss the California Condor natural history and biology, highlights and updates of the Arizona reintroduction program, current research, lead bullet reduction and education efforts and tell us the best places and times to see condors in Arizona.

NOTE: The May program will be associated with our Annual Banquet. This year's banquet will once again be held at Shalimar Country Club.

Notes & Announcements

March 6-9—Flowers and art become one at the fourth annual Arts & Flowers at Phoenix Art Museum—a four-day event at Phoenix Art Museum featuring sculptural floral designs inspired by and partnered with works of art in the Museum's collection. This spectacular event is presented by the Phoenix Art Museum League. For four days, breathtaking arrangements by dozens of Valley floral designers and garden clubs will be on view throughout the Museum's galleries to complement and illuminate the Museum's works of art. For information please contact: Margaret Spence, Phoenix Art Museum League at 480 227-8482 or Margaret.spence@cox.net

March 29—Phoenix blooms in March. See how six Valley homeowners and one school garden teacher have taken their properties from barren desert to restful havens at the seventh annual Real Gardens for Real People Tour on Saturday, March 29, 2008. The elf-guided tour from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. will cover the Scottsdale/Moon Valley area. Tickets, at \$20 each (\$24 if purchased online) will be limited to 1,000. For more information please contact: Margaret Spence, Publicity Co-Chair at 480-968-5944 or margaret.spence@cox.net or Mary Bossler, Publicity Co-Chair at 480-883-0730 or mgmz@cox.net. Check out the website at www.maricopamastergardener.org.

November Member Meeting—Due to the National Election this meeting is canceled. We urge you to vote. Please help make more than 25% of the registered voters in this country decide the direction our country is to take for the next 4 years.

E-mail alert system—Maricopa Audubon Society has established an e-mail alert system to notify members of upcoming events and activities. E-mail addresses were obtained from both the "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" roster and the National Audubon roster. There were several addresses that were returned, most likely because the e-mail addresses were not updated. If you would like to be included in or removed from this notification system, please let Jack Follett know at jackfollett@msn.com. The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

Silent Auction—Soliciting Donations for our annual silent auction fundraiser at the May banquet. Do you have any items you would like to donate? They don't need to be bird related. Do you provide a service? We can auction coupons as well. Please contact Laurie Nessel for information on how to donate. laurienessel@gmail.com, 480.968.5614.

Looking for ways to volunteer? Help is needed to coordinate the annual MAS Silent Auction. Contact Laurie Nessel laurienessel@gmail.com, 480.968.5614.

Birding Community E-Bulletin—A monthly bulletin with rare bird sightings and other birding information. If you would like to be put on the monthly emailing list please contact either Wayne Petersen (Director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas Program) at 718-259-2178 or wpetersen@massaudubon.org or Paul Baich at 410-992-9736 or paul.baich@verizon.net. They never sell the recipient list and you will receive a lot of interesting information.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum carpool website—<http://btacarpool.proboards74.com> Car pool and save gas when visiting the Arboretum. Just check out the website for details.

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge - Belize A new six-cabana, eco-friendly accommodation in Belize - Casa del Caballo Blanco is a 23-acre former ranch 9.5 miles from the Guatemalan border near San Ignacio. It also shelters the not-for-profit Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) (<http://www.casaavian.org/>). Its purpose is to understand and support the biodiversity of Belize that attracts and sustains over 530 species of migratory and resident birds spotted in a given year. Jodi and Vance Benté, owners of the property, also established The Alliance whose motto is: "Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them continue to sow their seeds." Their work has been undertaken in cooperation with the Government of Belize's efforts to protect critical habitat, the loss of which threatens the avian population. Guests are invited to share in the responsibilities of supporting the avian program. They can assist in nest-box building, maintenance and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit www.casacaballoblanco.com.

Book Store Selections—We now have a selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike 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.

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 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. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co—www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491.

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

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts—T-shirt Sale: MAS T-shirts are on sale at cost. Large and XL-\$9.00, XXL- \$12.00. Shipping \$5. Lot's of colors to choose from. Contact Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

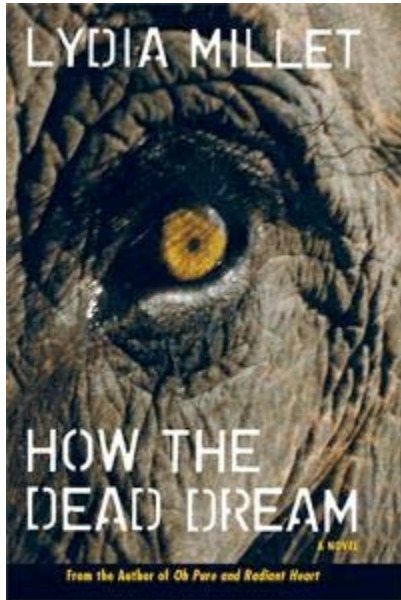
Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your submissions to the Editor—Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those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



New Novel Takes on Endangered Species and Extinction

How the Dead Dream, a new novel by Center for Biological Diversity staffer Lydia Millet, tells the story of an ambitious young real estate developer in L.A. who, after a personal crisis, becomes obsessed with rare and vanishing animals and starts breaking into zoos at night to be close to them. Millet, an award-winning novelist who also happens to be married to Center for Biological Diversity founder Kieran Suckling, has written one of the very first American novels to approach the emotional and aesthetic implications of the extinction tragedy. How the Dead Dream is notable for its thoughtful engagement with the social and per-

sonal effects of massive species loss: He soon learned to recognize the signs of an animal's imminent disappearance.



Some were tagged or collared or photographed, some monitored by bureaucrats. Sometimes a group or individual took up the cause of an animal or a plant and could muster the rationale for a lawsuit, and often the courts favored the victim; but the victim remained a victim and for each victim whose passing was noted thousands more slid away in

the dark.

As the story's protagonist struggles by night with ideas of human aloneness and

what it might mean to be a "last" animal, he's building sprawling subdivisions by day, grappling with his suicidal mother, whose husband has left her to find himself working in a gay bar in Key West, and fending off attacks by his brutal and jealous business partner Fulton.

How the Dead Dream is Millet's sixth novel, and not the first to explore environmental issues; her fifth, *Oh Pure and Radiant Heart*, dealt with the moral, cultural and philosophical legacy of nuclear weapons. Available from publisher Counterpoint in January 2008, *How the Dead Dream* has already been voted one of the top books of the year by both the National Book Critics' Circle and the American Library Association's Booklist.

Reading Group Guides to help spur discussion in book clubs and classes are available for both [conservation-focused](#) and [general](#) audiences.

Maricopa Audubon Society Annual Meeting and Banquet

SHALIMAR GOLF CLUB

2032 East Golf Avenue, Tempe, AZ

Tuesday, May 6, 2008

The Maricopa Audubon Society will hold its Annual Meeting and Banquet on Tuesday, May 6, 2008 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 Kathy Sullivan, who will give a program on Condors and we are fortunate to have her speak at our banquet! Kathy is the California Condor Program Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. She has also worked on the Whooping Crane and Sandhill Crane Recovery Projects,

monitored Spotted Owls and Goshawks in Arizona, sea turtles in Florida and engaged in marine mammal research in Mexico. Kathy will discuss the California Condor natural history and biology, highlights and updates of the Arizona reintroduction program, current research, lead bullet reduction and education efforts and tell us the best places and times to see condors in Arizona.

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 or 480-283-4515 or Jack Follett at 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!

Zone-tailed Hawk

Jim Burns

Here is yet another southwestern regional buteo with a special adaptive behavioral trait which helps it survive more easily. Zone-tailed Hawk, *Buteo albonotatus*, breeds locally in the rugged, lonesome country of central and southern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and west Texas, south through Mexico to central Argentina. This is a black hawk which may be mistaken for Common Black-Hawk but is most frequently overlooked because it mimics the flight patterns of the much more common Turkey Vulture with which it often soars.

Like TVs, Zonies fly with wings in a dihedral, rock from side to side on the thermals, and have a silvery appearance to their flight feathers, giving the underwing a two-toned look. It is not only birders who often dismiss Zone-taileds as just another vulture. Prey species, habituated to the more abundant, harmless, carrion-seeking vultures, do too, and raptor biologists are convinced that Zone-taileds have adapted this behavioral mimicry as a hunting technique. When a Zonie in a vulture kettle spots prey, it will continue to circle, but slip slowly lower and to the outside edge of its hosts, pass from sight behind intervening cover such as a rock or bush, then strike unexpectedly from behind the temporary concealment.

Seen soaring with the vultures or hunting individually, Zone-taileds glide along slowly, appearing casual or even lazy, but they are capable of breathtakingly rapid, falcon-like stoops when prey is sighted. They subsist primarily on small mammals and lizards, but will also take large insects and small birds up to the size of quail, sometimes snatching these latter items with their talons while in full flight. Broken terrain may be the preferred habitat because the cover it provides is so well-suited for the hunting style these buteos have perfected.

Zone-taileds most typically nest in tall, isolated trees along canyon streams, but will also utilize hillside evergreens and occasionally even cliff ledges and grottoes. Nests are large stick platforms, and they are often used several years in succession, with a few sprigs of fresh greenery newly added each spring. There are usually two eggs and incubation, by the female only, takes just over a month. For the first two weeks after hatching, the male brings food to the nest for the female to feed to the young. Flight occurs

in six to seven weeks.

Zone-tailed nests are usually well hidden in the upper reaches of the nest tree, and it is almost impossible to discover a nest before hearing the parents protesting your approach. The call is a long, thin, piercing scream. Be careful, as Zone-taileds have been known to attack human intruders who get too close during nesting season. Though there are occasional records of overwintering birds, this is a migratory hawk which leaves the U. S. in the fall. There has been some decline in this species as the mature cottonwoods they prefer have fallen to development and stream degradation throughout the southwest.

Zone-tailed Hawk is unique amongst our buteos in another way. The juveniles of most of our hawks are very distinct from the adults of the species, but very similar to one another—

various shades of mottled brown above with light underparts marked by dark streaks or spots. Juvenile Zonies look much like their parents, slaty black overall but with distinctive white spotting on the breast and a more lightly, finely barred tail.

In west Texas, where Zonies are widespread, birders are not. This makes finding the species easier in Arizona where it can be seen from the central part of the state south through the southeastern hotspots. North of Phoenix the best places are Mesquite Wash and Mt. Ord along the Beeline Highway (Highway 87) to Payson, and the Seven Springs area on the Tonto National Forest north of Carefree reached via the Cave Creek Road (see Mike Rupp's book).

In the southeast there are several recommended places to watch for Zone-taileds soaring high above: any of the lookouts at the top of Mt. Lemmon; along the lower reaches of Madera Canyon; from The Rest Area and the Paton's backyard in Patagonia; the tops of any of the Huachuca

Canyons; and the Barfoot fire lookout above Rustler Park in the Chiricahuas.

It's unlikely to mistake a Zonie in flight for a Common Black-Hawk. Black-Hawks are loners, associated in breeding season with riparian areas. Even at some distance their unique wing shape and striking tail pattern will stand out. Don't forget the

Zonie male's tail has one wide and one narrow white band, but the female's will show one wide and two narrow.

On perched birds look for three differences: the Black-Hawk's cere (bare skin above the upper mandible), facial skin, and legs will be orange-yellow, whereas the Zonie's cere and legs will be yellow without the orange tones, and its facial skin will be pale yellow to gray. The net effect is that the Black-Hawk appears contrastier overall and a more colorful bird. Perched, the latter's wings will not quite reach the tail tip. The Zonie's will. Perched, with tail folded up, the Black-Hawk's tail will show its white band both top and bottom. A perched Zonie will also show only one band top and bottom, but it will be white from below, gray from above.

Zone-taileds, probably because of the overlook factor, are known to be somewhat of a nemesis bird for out-of-staters visiting Arizona. Depending on whom you talk to, the best strategy seems to be either to meticulously glass every Turkey Vulture passing overhead, or just quit looking altogether and sooner or later a Zone-tailed is bound to find you.

One spring morning along Proctor Road below Madera Canyon I counted seventeen dark raptors riding a thermal—fourteen Turkey Vultures, two Golden Eagles—there must be a Zonie up there somewhere. There was, but it was the last one I identified out of the group, it took me fifteen minutes, and it only happened because the bird finally passed directly above, allowing a view of the undertail. One persistent bit of Zone-tailed identification lore says that in flight its feet and legs dangle downward from the body, whereas TVs' are tucked up. Try it and see if it works for you.

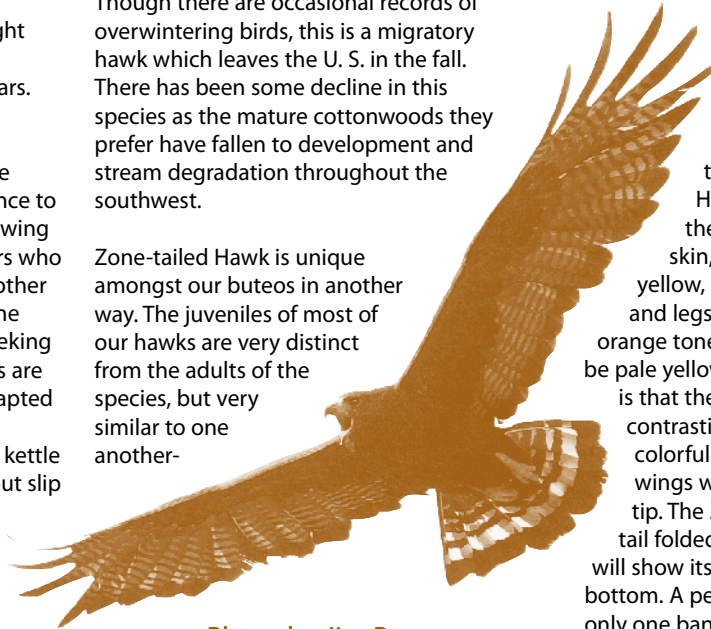


Photo by Jim Burns

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

In the agricultural areas of central and southeastern Arizona, winter is raptor time or, even more specifically, buteo time. These three photos typify the scenario--large, broad winged hawks passing directly overhead, backlit by the sun, showing off diagnostic but perhaps confusing underside patterns.



A) Good photo, easy bird



B) Good photo, difficult bird



C) Good photo, difficult bird

All Photos by Jim Burns

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

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 wading distance, considerable birding from vehicle and possible 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 and scope if recommended

Day Passes Required for National Forests. Many favorite spots in our National Forests now require Day Use Passes. You are responsible to acquire a day pass (\$6) in advance of field trips with an asterisk (). Passes are available by phone or mail, at FS district and ranger offices, Big 5, some Circle K's, the Shell station at Tom Darlington and Cave Creek Road and elsewhere. Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/tp/where.shtml> for more information.

New this season are several events in conjunction with The Arizona Trail Association, which is eager for folks to learn more about their program. "The Arizona Trail is a continuous, 800+ mile diverse and scenic trail across Arizona from Mexico to Utah. It links deserts, mountains, canyons, communities and people. Currently 94% of the trail is complete. The Arizona Trail Association's mission is simple: build, maintain, promote, protect and sustain the Arizona Trail as a unique encounter with the land." The Arizona Trail Association

Sunday, Feb. 17

Herps, Birds and Arthropods at 51st Ave and the Salt River. We will look for wintering waterfowl, raptors, horned larks, and other birds while searching for herps and arthropods that inhabit this last vestige of undisturbed streamside habitat along the urban stretch of the Salt River. Among the species we hope to see are Side-blotched, Zebra Tailed and Whiptail lizards, Desert Iguana, Little Worm and Checkered Garter snakes, Giant Desert Hairy Scorpion and Centipede. This area is slated to be converted into marsh by the City of Phoenix. Meet 7:30A. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Frank Welsh 480.218.9540, welshfj@yahoo.com, for reservations

Wednesday, Feb. 27

Phoenix Zoo Ponds. Meet on the zoo bridge at 7:00AM for possible Great Horned Owl sightings. We will proceed into the zoo grounds for great, up close views of waterfowl. This is especially good for beginners to learn the difference between male and female ducks. We will also be treated to other zoo surprises and behind the scenes exhibits. No limit. Done by 10:00A. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Mike Foley
Reservations: Laurie Nessel
480-968-5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, March 1

Sycamore Canyon. Join Tropical Birding field guide, Moez Ali, for an adventurous 2.5 mile hike in beautiful Sycamore Canyon in southeast Arizona. This stunning canyon with its high walls, running stream and good mix of vegetation types amid breathtaking scenery offers some truly exciting birding with its allure for rarities and many regional species. Wintering raptors, sparrows and flycatchers will dominate and early migrants like Lucy's and Yellow Warblers, Bell's Vireo, Scott's Oriole and others might be encountered. With luck, the gaudy Montezuma Quail, Elegant Trogon and Mountain Pygmy-Owl may thrill us with surprise sightings! We'll hike about 2.5 miles roundtrip over rugged terrain with little elevation gain. The primitive trail follows the canyon bed and is uneven and rough, occasionally with wet crossings. Please bring sturdy hiking boots and a

hiking stick if necessary, at least 2 quarts of water, a picnic lunch and snacks. Sunblock, a hat and light fleece would be handy as well. High clearance vehicles are recommended. With time, a brief stop to nearby birdy Pena Blanca Lake will follow picnic lunch. End around 2:00 pm Difficulty 4. Meet in downtown Tucson (TBA). Limit 10.

Leader: Moez Ali
Reservations and information
Laurie Nessel 480-968-5614,
laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, March 8th

Needle Rock and Rio Verde*. We will look for nesting Bald Eagle, Vermillion Flycatcher, Black Phoebe, and Western Bluebirds. Day pass to Tonto National Forest required, purchased in advance at some Circle K, Big 5, TNF offices and sporting goods stores. Meet 7:30A. Bring snack, water, lunch. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Herb Fibel 480.966.5246,
herbertsfibel@aol.com for reservations,
meeting location and carpooling

Saturday, March 15

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 for
reservations

Tuesday, March 18th

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 Trogon, Black Capped Gnatcatcher, Hammonds, Dusky and Gray

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Flycatchers and Sage thrasher. Botanist may want to reserve time to peruse the herbarium in 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: Laurie Nessel,
laurienessel@hotmail.com,
480.968.5614

Wednesday, March 26

*Native Flowers and Plants of the East Valley. Join us for a walk in the desert by the lower Salt River to look for wildflowers and other native plants. Staggered winter rains promise an interesting season for flora. We will touch on identification techniques and ecology. Bring binoculars as we will be watching for typical desert birds as well (and you can use them backwards as a loupe). Limit 15. Difficulty 1. Bring snacks and water. Lunch optional.

Leader: Mel Bramley 480.969.9893
evenings for reservations and information.

Saturday, March 29

Santa Rita Big Tree Adventure. We join the state coordinator for the National Register of Big Trees, Ken Morrow, in search of a pair of champion Apache Pines at McBeth Springs. We will also look for early spring migrants. This is a moderate, full day hike on established trails in a wilderness area, 6-7,000'. If inclement weather, a lower elevation alternate will be searching the springs and canyons of the Tumacácoris for Gooding Ash and Mearn Sumac and Arizona's only native pepper. Expect a rough road. May be chilly. Bring lunch, snacks, water and work gloves for those willing to help clear out migrant trash. Difficulty 3. As an added bonus, you may join the Arizona Trail Association to participate that evening in a bat survey (see next field trip).

Leader: Ken Morrow
Reservations: Laurie Nessel
480-968-5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, April 5

Salome Hwy Thrasher Site. On the far west side of Phoenix at the intersection of Baseline Road and the Salome Highway, resident Bendire's, Crissal and Curve-billed thrashers may be seen as well as Le Conte's and other low desert breeding birds. Meet at McDonalds at Dysart south of I-10 at 6:00A. Done by lunch. Bring snack and water. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Bill Grossi BLM Wildlife & Fisheries Program Leader
Reservations: Laurie Nessel
480-968-5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, April 12, 2008

San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. We will visit this famous birding location in southeastern Arizona, a rich deciduous riparian woodland including about 40 miles of the San Pedro River extending from the Mexican border on the south nearly to St. David on the north. Birding will be done in the town of St. David (principally at the Holy Trinity Monastery), the ghost town of Fairbank (historical too), at the famous San Pedro House (including the Green Kingfisher Pond), checking the Hereford Bridge area along the river, and possibly the Palominas property just a few miles from the border. Species of birds we could see are a combination of late wintering residents and early spring migrants, including Gray Hawk, Pyrrhuloxia, Lucy's Warbler, Northern Beardless-Tyrannulet, White-winged Dove, and ... Green Kingfisher. Bring water, lunch, and sturdy walking shoes. Tentative meeting place is at the post office in St. David along State Route 80 at 7:30A. Limit: 15, Difficulty: 2

Leader: Richard Kaiser, (602) 276-3312 or rkaiserinaz@aol.com, for reservations and information.

Saturday, April 19

Reavis Creek and Montana Mountain (Superstition Wilderness). We will travel up the Reavis Creek drainage to Montana Mountain, north of Superior, at elevations from 2,700 to 6,350 feet. This spectacularly beautiful area is rich in birds but is so seldom birded that we nicknamed it Area 51 in the Superior CBC. The variety of habitats includes upper Sonoran scrub, open grassland,

oak thickets, and one-seed and alligator junipers. Expect large numbers of Hooded Orioles, Black-Throated Sparrows, and Bell's Vireos. Other common birds include (at various elevations) Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, numerous flycatchers (Empids and Tyrants), Mexican and Scrub Jays, Stellar's Jays, Bushtits, Bridled Titmice, Cardinals, and a wide variety of migrant and resident warblers. Large numbers of several sparrow species are expected, and all four of our regular towhee species are possible. Meet 5:30A at the Open Range Steakhouse just east of Apache Junction to consolidate into 4WDs.

Directions to the Open Range Steakhouse: The Superstition Freeway becomes divided Hwy. 60 at Mountain View Dr. just east of Apache Jct. From there you go about 4 miles to Kings Ranch Rd. (the third stop light from Mountain View Dr.) There is a Best Western Hotel at the intersection of Hwy. 60 and Kings Ranch Rd. You can only turn north on Kings Ranch Rd. Go north about 1 mile and the Open Range Steakhouse is on the left, just past the entrance of Gold Canyon Golf Resort. This is a full day trip, so bring a lunch and plenty of water. Difficulty 3 (rough roads but only moderate hiking). Limit 12.

Leader: Tom Gaskill,
gaskillt@mindspring.com, 602-712-0635
for information and reservations

Saturday, April 26

Workman Creek, Sierra Ancha Experimental Station and Parker Creek. This trip will take people to a number of vehicle stops at Workman Creek and Parker Creek, along the Young Road north of Roosevelt Lake. It is a great opportunity to see birds and some great riparian vegetation. Issues involving uranium mining, the status of the Sierra Ancha Experimental Station and fire will be discussed. Difficulty 1 (some hiking not to exceed two miles).

Co-Leaders: Russ Haughey
and Gene Sturla
Reservations and information: Laurie Nessel, laurienessel@hotmail.com,
480.968.5614

continued on page 10

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

continued from page 9

Saturday, May 3

Patagonia-Nogales-Madera Canyon Loop. Here is a longer but very exciting field trip for spring migrants and early summer arrivals. We will leave from Tempe, and arrive in Patagonia about 6:30A. For those going down earlier and staying overnight, meet us near the rest rooms in the park at 4th Ave. in Patagonia. We will then bird the Patton's, the Patagonia TNC Reserve, lunch at the Patagonia Rest stop (bring your own lunch and drinks), Kino Springs, Rio Rico Ponds, and then be at Madera Canyon for the early afternoon and an hour or two of birding there. We will return to Tempe around 5:00P. We did this same trip in May 2007 and saw 125 species including Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Flame-colored Tanager, Botteri's Sparrow, Tropical Kingbird, Thick-billed Kingbird, Gray Hawk, Elegant Trogon and Violet-crowned Hummingbird. Limit of five cars. Meet at S.E. parking lot of Tempe Library at Southern and Rural to depart at 3:30A SHARP. Bring your Golden Eagle Pass or pay \$5 US Forest Service fee/car at Madera Canyon. Donation of \$5/person at the TNC Patagonia Reserve. Difficulty 1.

Leader: David L. Pearson

Reservations: Laurie Nessel,
480-968-5614, laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, May 10

*Usery Mountain and Blue Point: Hilltopping Insects. Join Dr. John Alcock for a peek inside the fascinating world of insects. We will start with some early morning birding at Blue Point. Then we will head to Usery Mountain Recreation Area (\$6 per vehicle fee) for a walk around the Merkle Trail, to see if male tarantula hawks are on territory at a local hilltop in the park. Other hilltopping insects are possible such as certain butterflies and flies that wait at these locations for mates. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 2 (gentle climbing in the heat). Meet at the entrance to Blue Point Recreation Site, 6:15am. A \$6 Tonto N.F. or Golden Eagle Pass is required, purchased in advance. Carpooling is encouraged.

Leader: Dr. John Alcock

Reservations and Carpooling:
Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614,
laurienessel@gmail.com

Saturday, June 21

Butterflies – finding, identifying and photographing -along the Arizona Trail, Mogollon Rim. Maricopa Audubon Society members are invited to join the Arizona Trail Association hike a part of the AZ/Highline trail in pursuit of colorful butterflies. As the temperature rises, the flowers start to bloom higher in elevation. Butterflies follow this nectar flow upwards and June is the perfect time to check them out. Abundant bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) attracts Fritillaries. Orange milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and thistle (*Cirsium* spp.) are also nectar feeding butterfly magnets. Blues mud-puddle at springs along the trail. California Sister and Weidemeyer's Admiral are mostly found on trees. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. Bring water, snacks, a sack lunch and a pair of close-focusing binoculars. The trail is moderately steep in places, but we will take our time. Meet at Denny's on Shea Blvd in Fountain Hills at 6:30 a.m. or at the trailhead at 8 a.m. To get to the trailhead, drive ¾ mile past the Highway 260 intersection and turn right onto Houston Mesa Road. Cross all 3 water crossings. After about 8 miles turn left at the stop sign. The road turns into dirt. After about 2 miles, turn right toward Shadow Rim Camp and Washington Park Trailhead. Follow this road up about 6 miles until the right turn-off to the Washington Park Trailhead (marked). After a bit, turn left (signs again) and you will find the trailhead well marked.

Leader: Marceline VandeWater
(with Wendy Hodgson)

Reservations: Wendy Hodgson,
whodgson@dbg.org or (480) 481-8108

Continuing

Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens. Mondays and second Saturday. Free with admission to the garden. 8:00A through April. 7:00A May-September. Join expert birders for a morning bird walk along the Garden trails. Everyone, including first-time birders, is welcome. Wear a hat, sunscreen, and comfortable shoes, and bring binoculars if available.

Bird, Butterfly or Dragonfly Walks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Join knowledgeable guides for Saturday walks through the arboretum. The Arboretum

is located at Highway 60 milepost #223 near the historic copper mining town of Superior, 55 miles east of Phoenix. \$7.50 admission. Check their website for current schedule,
<http://cals.arizona.edu/BTA/index.html>.

Bird Walks at Patagonia Lake State Park. Mondays through April 15th with Ranger Bill Adler. Volunteers lead Thursday and Saturday walks on the east side of Patagonia Lake. Bird Walks at Sonoita Creek Natural Area. Join Ranger Bill Adler for monthly, Saturday 5 mile bird hikes along both upland and riparian habitats. Reservations required. Both locations are accessed from Patagonia Lake Road, 7 miles west of Patagonia. Visit their website for current schedule. \$7 entry fee per vehicle. <http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sonoitacreeksna.html>

March / April Bird Walks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum The famous Hybrid Hummingbird was still being seen as of press time for this issue of the Wren-dition, and recent winter sightings at BTA include a Saw-whet Owl. The popular series of guided bird walks continues at 8:30 a.m. during March and April -- a chance to hone your skills identifying native Sonoran desert birds (occasional exotic migrants as well) on a two-hour bird walk guided by different avian experts each week. Bird walks repeat on the first and third Saturdays (second and fourth Sundays, too) during February, March and April. Guided walks will be lead by Dave Powell on March 1, Cindy Marple & Marceline VandeWater March 9; Troy Corman, Pete Moulton & Cynthia Donald on March 15, Kurt & Cindy Radamaker March 23; Troy Corman, Pete Moulton & Cynthia Donald on April 5; Dave Powell & Marceline VandeWater April 13, Kathe Anderson on April 19 and the final scheduled walk will be lead by Rich Ditch on April 27. Admission of \$7.50 for adults, \$3 ages 5-12 includes guided bird walks (free to BTA annual members). Read recent birder checklist reports on the award-winning Arboretum website: <http://ag.arizona.edu/BTA>

Rancho Esmeralda Birding & Nature Adventure

April 18-21, 2008

Join the Desert Botanical Gardens and Pinau Merlin, author and naturalist, plus birding guide Larry Liese and herpetologist Bill Burger for a fun filled 4 day natural history weekend of exploring beautiful and lush Rancho Esmeralda in Sonora, Mexico. The diversity of habitats (streams, canyons, oak woodland) on this 20,000 acre Ranch feature well over 100 species of birds, including rose-throated becards, elegant trogons, thick-billed kingbirds, gray



hawks, yellow-billed cuckoos, varied buntings, hummingbirds and a diversity of other wildlife (deer, coatis, turkeys, ringtail cats, etc.) Each day our small group ventures out on walks with our expert guides, exploring the many canyons and streams where we look at and learn about birds, wonderful plants and flowers, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians and of course, stunning scenery. There's time for siesta or relaxing by the pool before dinner. Later, we'll blacklight at night for beautiful insects and we'll have a



chance to see bats up close and personal with our bat biologist. We'll look and listen for owls, night birds and other night creatures as well on our night walks.

The trip includes round trip transportation from the DBG in Phoenix, 3 nights accommodations at the elegantly rustic Rancho Esmeralda Lodge, (completely reserved for our group) all activities, excellent meals, expert guides and maximum fun.

PRICE: \$915. per person (includes a \$50 donation to DBG.) Call Pinau for more information or to sign up @ 546-9409 or email at pinaumerlin@hotmail.com

GUIDES

Pinau Merlin, trip leader, ecology, natural history, mammals Pinau is fascinated by the natural world and loves to share that fascination with others by teaching and organizing trips to intriguing places. Pinau has led hundreds of field trips and



expeditions throughout the southwest, Mexico and Central America. She is the author of several natural history books (Field Guide to Desert Holes, Guide to Bird Nests and Eggs, Hummingbirds of the West, Soaring Birds of the West, contributing author to the Natural History of the Sonoran Desert) and numerous natural history articles. Pinau and her work have been featured in Smithsonian and National Wildlife magazines, on PBS and NPR. She presents natural history programs to groups throughout the US, including National

Wildlife Federation, Smithsonian, Denver Museum of Nature and Science and American Birding Association, among many others. She has taught natural history at the University of Arizona, and also teaches tracking, outdoor observation skills and naturalist training classes.

Larry Liese, birds

Larry came by his love for the outdoors at an early age. Raised in Vermont, he spent much of his youth backpacking and hiking.



After migrating to Arizona, Larry fell under the spell of birding and now makes regular forays into Mexico to discover birding hotspots there. Retiring early from a career in power electronics, Larry now is very active in the Tucson Audubon chapter. Besides leading over one hundred of their field trips and serving on their Board, Larry also authored a long-standing column in their newsletter on bird identification. Larry loves sharing his passion for birds with people of all levels and his skill and patience ensures a good time for all. His excitement and enthusiasm are contagious.

Bill Burger, bats, herpetology

Bill has his Master's Degree in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University in California. He has worked for the US Forest Service, US Fish &



Wildlife Service, and Telonics, Inc. For the past 10 years he has been with the Arizona Game & Fish Department,

and he is currently the Regional Non-game Specialist for central Arizona. He works with a variety of species including bats, herpetofauna, and birds. Bill enjoys hiking, backpacking, traveling, and just about any excuse to be outdoors and in remote areas. Bill delights

in sharing his excitement about the natural world with others.

Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER &
NOVEMBER 2007

Between one and four Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were reported at Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR) Sept. 9-29 (TT,MM) and one was seen at Papago Park Oct. 14 (JBu). Greater White-fronted Geese continued to be more common than usual: one was observed at the new Higley Rd. ponds Sept. 15 (RWz), eleven were counted at Paloma Sept. 16 (PD,TC), two juveniles were reported at the Lower River Rd. (LLR) ponds in Palo Verde Oct. 14, at least until Nov. 24 when they were joined by an adult (TC,JJ et al.), one at the Pavilions ponds in Scottsdale Oct. 21 (JM,JBu), and one at McCormick Ranch Nov. 27 (DF).

A juvenile Snow Goose was observed in Scottsdale Nov. 4 (TC) and four were counted at the LRR ponds Nov. 24 (TC,JJ). The resident Ross's Goose at Chaparral Park (since fall 2006) was still present there Nov. 23 (MW). Individual male Wood Ducks were reported on the Salt River at Phon D. Sutton Nov. 1 (A&PM) and at Kiwanis Park in Tempe Nov. 7-8 (RF,PD). The female Eurasian Wigeon returned for the fourth consecutive winter to the Paradise Memorial Cemetery pond in Scottsdale where it was seen Oct. 25 at least until Nov. 23 (KR,MW). Two "Mexican" Mallards were observed at GWR Sept. 19 at least until Nov. 15 (MM).

All three scoter species (rare fall transients) were discovered at Saguaro Lake during the period: a first year female Surf Scoter was observed there Oct. 30 – Nov. 3 (DT,JM et al.), a first year female White-winged Scoter Nov. 1-15 (A&PM,TC et al.) represented only the fifth county record, and a female Black Scoter Oct. 21-25 (KR et al.) provided only the third county record. Between one and 23 Common Goldeneyes were reported Nov. 23-30 in Avondale, Fountain Hills Lake, Gilbert Rd. pond, and Watermelon Rd. ponds in Gila Bend (TC,JA,MW,MH). Four Red-breasted Mergansers (uncommon

winter visitors) were reported at the LRR ponds Nov. 4 (BG) and a female was seen on the Salt River near Granite Reef Picnic Area (GRPA) Nov. 7 (SG).

Individual Common Loons were reported on Lake Pleasant Oct. 24 (RWd) and on Saguaro Lake Nov. 1 at least until Nov. 18 (A&PM et al.). Between 50 and 300 Am. White Pelicans were reported at Painted Rock Dam (PRD) during the period (m.ob.), a few were observed at Horseshoe Dam Oct. 10 (RWd,LH), 12 were counted on the Gila River at Estrella Park Oct. 14 (MH), and one was seen at the LRR ponds Nov. 10-24 (MH,TC et al.). Two Brown Pelicans were reported in a canal near Gila Bend Oct. 13 (BG).

The Am. Bittern at GWR since Aug. 2, remained at least until Oct. 28 (SG). One hundred Cattle Egrets were counted at Paloma Oct. 13 (BG) and two were observed at GWR Nov. 3 (TT)

An Osprey was observed at an unusual location, at Oak Flat near Superior Sept. 26 (RWd,LH). A White-tailed Kite (an uncommon visitor) was seen in Hidden Valley, w. Pinal County Sept. 24, and a second one was seen there Sept. 30 (NL). Another individual was observed in Arlington Valley Nov. 25 (MH). A Red-shouldered Hawk was heard at the Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP) Sept. 8 (PM), two adults were seen south of HRP Oct. 24 (RWd,LH), and an immature was observed at Morgan City Wash (MCW) Oct. 21 (TC et al.). A Zone-tailed Hawk was seen at GWR Oct. 20 (PM,CD), the same time it was reported there the previous two falls. Individual Crested Caracaras (casual visitors) were discovered in Vekol Valley, south of I-8 Sept. 15 (TJ, fide TC) and a juvenile at the Gila River, w. of Gila Bend Nov. 25 (JH). Individual Merlins were reported at GWR Sept. 8 (MM) and at GRPA Oct. 14 (HF et al.).

Up to 75 Sandhill Cranes were observed in Arlington Valley Nov. 4-12 (MH,BG).

An unusually high number of seven Black-bellied Plovers were counted at Paloma Oct. 13 (BG) and one was seen in Palo Verde Oct. 14 (TC,DF,JJ).

A Snowy Plover (also an uncommon transient) was observed at the Gila Bend Power Plant ponds Sept. 16 (TC). A juvenile Mountain Plover (a rare visitor) was discovered at the Rousseau Sod Farm, e. of Scottsdale Oct. 28 (K&CR).

Six late-staying Am. Avocets were seen at LRR ponds Nov. 4-10 (BG,CB,SS) and two were still present there Nov. 24 (TC,JJ). Three Lesser Yellowlegs were still present at Rio Salado on the late date of Nov. 4 (TG) and individuals were still present at LRR ponds Nov. 10 (CB,SS) and at GWR Nov. 18 (MM). A Marbled Godwit was found at Paloma Sept. 11 – Oct. 13 (BG), four were observed in Gila Bend Sept. 16 (TC) and two were found in Palo Verde Oct. 14 (TC,DF,JJ). A Dunlin was observed at ponds east of LRR ponds on the early date of Sept. 12 (RWz), one was seen at Rio Salado Oct. 8 (TG), five were found at Paloma Oct. 10 (KR), three were reported at GWR Oct. 20 (DS), and between one and two were observed at LRR ponds Nov. 4-16 (BG,CB,MH,TC et al.). Two Stilt Sandpipers were observed at GWR on the late date of Nov. 12 (TC) and provided the first November record for the county.

Before this fall there were only three county records of Buff-breasted Sandpiper; now there are six! Two individuals were discovered at Paloma Sept. 11-16 (BG et al.) and a third individual was discovered at Rousseau Sod Farm Sept. 25-30 (KR et al.). A juvenile Ruff was first seen at GWR Oct. 25 (LH) and identified Oct. 27 (PM,RD); there have been only two previous county records.

A juvenile Herring Gull (a casual transient) was found with 16 Ring-billed Gulls at LRR ponds Nov. 10 (MH et al.) and was joined by a second one there Nov. 16 (TC et al.). Individual juvenile Sabine's Gulls (also casual transients) were found at PRD Sept. 30 (K&CR) and at the Pavilions ponds Oct. 20-21 (WT,HBe,BI et al.). A Caspian Tern (an uncommon migrant) was seen flying over MCW Sept. 8 (TC,DF). An adult Common Tern (also an uncommon

migrant) was observed at Paloma Sept. 16 (TC). A Black Tern (uncommon fall transient) was found at the sludge pond, Citrus Valley Rd., Gila Bend Sept. 30 (K&CR).

Two late White-winged Doves were observed at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA) Nov. 2-11 (CT). A female Ruddy Ground-Dove (only a casual visitor) was discovered at GWR Nov. 14 (GB).

An Elf Owl was found at GWR on the late date of Oct. 8 (RF). An injured Long-eared Owl was picked up in Mesa Nov. 9 and taken to Liberty Wildlife Rehabilitation Center Nov. 9 (fide PH). Three Lesser Nighthawks were reported in n.e. Tempe Nov. 6 (MS) and one was observed at Chaparral Park Nov. 30 (CO); the species is rarely found after the end of October. A Common Poorwill was observed at BTA on the late dates of Nov. 4-7 (CT). A Vaux's Swift was observed at BTA Sept. 20 (MW), two were seen at GWR Oct. 5 (MM) and one was seen at GRPA Oct. 14 (HF et al.).

Individual Broad-billed Hummingbirds were found at HRP (farther north than usual) Sept. 8 (PM et al.), in a Paradise Valley yard Sept. 27 (BI), and at BTA Oct. 28 at least until Nov. 25 (RD,PM,CD,EH). A Broad-tailed Hummingbird (rare in fall in the lowlands) was observed at Rio Salado Oct. 8 (TG).

A Lewis's Woodpecker was discovered in Hidden Valley Oct. 14 (NL). An Acorn Woodpecker (unusual in the lowlands) was found Sept. 13, also in Hidden Valley (NL). An adult Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was discovered at BTA Oct. 28 (RD,PM,CD). A Hairy Woodpecker (unusual in the lowlands) was found Oct. 25 at Whitlow Dam, where it has been recorded once previously (JBa). A female "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker was observed at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT et al.).

An Eastern Phoebe was discovered at Rio Salado Oct. 6-8 (EL,TG). A late-lingering Brown-crested Flycatcher was observed at MCW Sept. 8 (TC,DF). Two Tropical Kingbirds remained at HRP at least until Sept. 1 (MH).

A late-staying Bell's Vireo was found at GWR Oct. 5 and remained at least until the end of November (MM); one has wintered in that area for the past two years. Individual Cassin's Vireos were observed at BTA Nov. 3 (TC,PM,CT) and at Paloma Nov. 10 (CB,SS). A Red-eyed Vireo was discovered near the confluence of MCW and the Agua Fria River Sept. 22 (TC).

W. Scrub-Jays were part of the fall's invasion of higher elevation species in the lowlands: individuals were reported in Mesa Oct. 4 (MM), at MCW Oct. 13 (TC), in a Phoenix yard Oct. 18 (MD), and at BTA throughout November (CT,EH).

Also part of the invasion into the lowlands were Mountain Chickadees, Bridled Titmice, Red-breasted Nuthatches, White-breasted Nuthatches, Brown Creepers, and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Individual Mountain Chickadees were reported at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT), at GRPA Nov. 7 (SG), and at Whitlow Dam Nov. 13 (JBa,RWz) at least to the end of November (JBa). Two Bridled Titmice were seen at GRPA Oct. 8 (SG), several were found at Box Bar on the Verde River in mid-November (KR), and one was reported at BTA throughout November (CT,EH).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread: between one and four were reported at BTA from Oct. 6 at least to mid-November (JM,RWz,TC,PM,CT,RF), one was seen at Coon Bluff Oct. 8 (SG) and one at Rio Salado the same day (TG), one was found in a Scottsdale yard Oct. 12 – Nov. 8 (JBu), between four and five were seen at MCW Oct. 13 (TC), two were reported in a Tempe yard Oct. 23 – Nov. 4 (JN), one was observed at Whitlow Dam Oct. 25 – Nov. 13 (JBa), and three were seen in Tempe Nov. 27 (JJ).

Individual White-breasted Nuthatches were reported at MCW Sept. 22 (TC), at GWR Oct. 17 (MS), at Whitlow Dam Oct. 25 – Nov. 13 (JBa). at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT), and in Avondale Nov. 23 (TC). Individual Brown Creepers were found at GRPA Oct. 8-24 (SG,ES), at Whitlow Dam Oct. 25 at least to the

end of November (JBa), at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT,TC,PM), and two at Eldorado Park Nov. 7-28 (JBa). Individual Golden-crowned Kinglets were seen at MCW Oct. 21 (TC et al.), at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT), behind Tempe Marketplace Nov. 11 (KR), and three were found at Whitlow Dam Oct. 25 at least through the end of November (JBa).

Three Townsend's Solitaires (one singing) were observed at Sunflower Oct. 18 (LH,RWd) and one was seen at Eldorado Park Oct. 22 (LH). Individual Am. Robins were reported in two Tempe yards Oct. 20 (BE) and Nov. 6 (JN), at BTA Oct. 28 – Nov. 3 (RD,PM,CD,TC), and several were found at MCW Oct. 21 (TC et al.). A male Varied Thrush was discovered at HRP Oct. 13 (MH).

A Gray Catbird, discovered in a Scottsdale yard Nov. 4 (JBu), provided the seventh record for the county. A Brown Thrasher was found at Oak Flat near Superior Sept. 21 at least until Nov. 3 (CT,CD). A Brown Thrasher returned to BTA Oct. 15 for the eighth consecutive winter (CT). Small numbers of Cedar Waxwings were found at MCW and BTA during the period (TC,DF,JM,PM,CT,EH).

An Olive Warbler was heard giving a partial song at BTA Nov. 3 (CT). An immature Tennessee Warbler was discovered at GWR Nov. 9-20 (MM et al.). A Nashville Warbler was reported at GWR on the late date of Nov. 12 (TC). A Lucy's Warbler, seen at GWR on the late date of Nov. 18 (MM), provided the first November record for the county. Individual late-staying Yellow Warblers were reported at Eldorado Park Oct. 19 (MS), at Paloma Oct. 27 (CB,SS), at GWR Nov. 3-26 (TT,SG,MM,TC), and two at Rio Salado Nov. 29 (MM).

An immature Magnolia Warbler was discovered at GWR Nov. 9-15 (MM et al.) and provided the 10th record for the county and the second for GWR. An immature Black-throated Blue Warbler was found at Rio Salado Sept. 15 – Oct. 8 (TG,JM,RL). A female

continued on page 14

Field Observations

continued from page 13

Black-throated Green Warbler was found at GWR Oct. 24 (MM et al.). A Hermit Warbler was seen at HRP Sept. 15 (K&CR).

A first year female Blackburnian Warbler was discovered at Eldorado Park Oct. 17-21 (JBa et al.); there have been only three previous county records. A Grace's Warbler was seen on the late date of Oct. 10 at Box Bar (RWd,LH); the species is not usually found in the county after early September. An immature Blackpoll Warbler was found at GWR Oct. 27-28 (PD); there have been eight previous county records. Individual Black-and-white Warblers were reported at Rio Salado Sept. 21 (JBu), at Rio Verde Ranch Oct. 7 (HF), and at the Desert Botanical Garden Oct. 13 (TC).

An Am. Redstart was seen at Paloma Sept. 30 (K&CR). A Prothonotary Warbler was found at Agua Fria National Monument Sept. 16 (RM); there were only six previous county records. Individual Ovenbirds were discovered at Rio Salado Sept. 17 – Oct. 8 (HBo,TG) and in a Scottsdale yard Oct. 9 (AS). Individual N. Waterthrushes were reported at Eldorado Park Sept. 5 (JBa), at MCW Sept. 8 (TC,DF) and at GWR Sept. 9 (JBu). A first year Mourning Warbler, discovered at MCW Sept. 8 (TC), provided only the second record for the county. A pair of Painted Redstarts (rare in the lowlands) were photographed in Hidden Valley Sept. 4 (NL).

Individual late Summer Tanagers were reported in a Tolleson yard Oct. 6 (BG), at BTA Oct. 20 (CW), and a male returned Nov. 10 to a Tempe neighborhood where it has wintered for the past six years (BE).

A Grasshopper Sparrow was discovered at the Gila Bend sewage ponds Oct. 27 (CB). Individual "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows were observed at GWR Oct. 18 – Nov. 26 (RD,TC), at MCW Oct. 21 (TC et al.), in a Scottsdale yard Oct. 29 – Nov. 29 (JBa), and at BTA Nov. 1-25 (CT,EH). Individual White-throated Sparrows were found at Eldorado Park Oct. 29 (JBa),

at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT), and at Rio Salado Nov. 12 (TG). Individual "Slate-colored" Juncos were observed in Hidden Valley Sept. 27 (NL) and at GRPA Oct. 24 (ES). A McCown's Lonspur was discovered at Rousseau Sod Farm Oct. 28 (K&CR) and by Nov. 4 the number had increased to five or six (TC).

A N. Cardinal was observed still feeding a fledgling in Hidden Valley Oct. 15, several weeks later than noted in the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas (NL). Individual Pyrrhuloxias were found in out-of-the-ordinary places at Saguaro Lake Nov. 5 (MM) and at GWR Nov. 12-23 (RF,MM). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was found in a w. Phoenix yard Sept. 6 (RS). Individual Lazuli Buntings were found on the late date of Nov. 1 at BTA (CT) and in a Scottsdale yard on the very late date of Nov. 21-23 (JBa). A female Painted Bunting was discovered at Rio Salado Nov. 24 (TG et al.); there have been only seven previous county records. Individual Dickcissels (casual fall transients) were found at BTA Sept. 15 (BS), at Paloma Sept. 30 (K&CR), and at GWR (BW).

An adult Common Grackle was discovered at Paloma Oct. 27 (CB,SS) and provided only the fourth county record. The Streak-backed Oriole returned for the third consecutive fall to the GWR where it was seen Oct. 9 at least until Nov. 17 (THu,MM,BW,RD).

Finches were also a part of the fall invasion into the lowlands. Between one and three Cassin's Finch's were seen in a south Phoenix yard Oct. 23-25 and Nov. 4 (LS); another individual was reported at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT). A few Red Crossbills were seen at BTA Nov. 6 & 25 (CT,EH). Individual Pine Siskins were observed in Tempe Oct. 9 (THi), at MCW Oct. 13 (TC), at Paloma Oct. 26 (BG), and at BTA Nov. 1 (CT). Three Pine Siskins were reported at Oak Flat Oct. 6 (JM), two were seen at MCW Oct. 21 (TC et al.), between one and three were seen in a Tempe yard Oct. 19 & 26 (BE), and two were seen at Rio Salado Nov. 12 (TG).

Individual Lawrence's Goldfinches were reported at HRP Sept. 15 and

Oct. 5 (K&CR,MH), at GRPA Oct. 8 (SG), and at Paloma Oct. 27 (CB,SS); three small groups were observed at Oak Flat Sept. 21 (CT), up to six were seen at Rio Salado Sept. 28 – Nov. 24 (TG), between one and 20 were reported at BTA Nov. 1-10 (CT,RF), and a large group of 100 was observed on the Salt River Indian Reservation along Dobson Road Nov. 23 (MW). Individual Am. Goldfinches were seen at GWR Sept. 27 (MM), at MCW Oct. 13 & 21 (TC), and at BTA Nov. 1 (CT); a few were found at Oak Flat Oct. 6 (JM) and a few were reported at Rio Salado Nov. 12 & 24 (TG). An Evening Grosbeak was observed at BTA Nov. 1-7 (CT).

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson (BTA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Granite Reef Picnic Area (GRPA), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), Lower River Road (LRR), Morgan City Wash (MCW), Painted Rock Dam (PRD).

Observers: Jerry Allen, Charles Babbitt, Jack Bartley (JBa), Harvey Beatty (HBe), Gavin Bieber, Harold Bond (HBo), Jim Burns (JBu), Troy Corman, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Cynthia Donald, Margaret Dyekman, Brian Enos, Dave Ferreira, Herb Fibel, Randy Forrest, Steve Ganley, Tom Gaskill, Bill Grossi, Paul Halesworth, Jerry Hammon, Liz Hatcher, Melanie Herring, Tom Hildebrandt (THi), Eric Hough, Tami Huizir (THu), Brian Ison, Justin Jones, Tom Jones, Rob Lane, Nancy Lange, Eric Latturmer, Jon Mann, many observers (m.ob.), Adam & Phyllis Martin, Robert McCormick, Michael Moore, Pete Moulton, Jeanette Nickels, Charles Oldham, Cindy Radamaker, Kurt Radamaker, Myron Scott, Leanna Shaberly, Allison Shock, Robin Silver, Sig Stangeland, Dave Stejskal, Ed Strong, Brian Sullivan, Terry Thomas, Walter Thurber, Carl Tomoff, Diane Touret, Magill Weber, Russ Widner (RWd), Barb Winterfield, Cathy Wise, Robert Witzeman (RWz).

Maricopa Audubon field trip Nov. 4, Casa Grande and Santa Cruz Flats by David L. Pearson--Probably no other field trip of MAS has ever seen Northern Jacana and Mountain Plover on the same day! Nine of us from MAS pulled into the back of the Casa Grande Golf Course at 6:45 am and found twenty other birders already there watching the NORTHERN JACANA wandering around on the green of the 14th hole. We had full scope looks for about ten minutes before it decided to fly to the other end of the pond. We then drove down to Arizona City where at the lake along San Lazaro Rd. we had several Western Grebes, a female Lesser Scaup and Belted Kingfisher. Along Green Reservoir Rd., on the Santa Cruz Flats, we found Prairie Falcon, Vermilion Flycatcher, Lark Buntings and many Savanna, Vesper, Brewers, and White-crowned Sparrows. On Western Sod Farm fields, we had hundreds of American Pipits, 30 Least Sandpipers and 2 Greater Yellowlegs. At the irrigated fields near Twitty and Pretzer Roads we finally tracked down 15 MOUNTAIN PLOVERS, 2

Merlins and a Ferruginous Hawk. Further along Baumgartner Rd in the pecan groves we found Crissal Thrasher, Pyrrhuloxia, heard a Bendire's Thrasher and saw a BLACK-THROATED-GRAY WARBLER and LAWRENCE'S GOLDFINCH. We ended with a total of 83 bird species, even if it was a very hot day for November.

SUNFLOWER AREA – November 17 by Richard Kaiser. The month of November may not be the best month for birding in Arizona, but twelve people met to check out a few places in this area off of the Beeline Highway, prior to the holiday season. Our first stop of the morning was in the west turnoff signed Mesquite Wash, where we beat the ATV riders, but not the sound of paintball shooters! Anyway, walking quite far back from the highway, we saw Black-throated Sparrow, Gray Flycatcher (identified by the downward-pumping tail), Northern Mockingbird, and Abert's Towhee. As expected, a small marshy area produced the best birds: a Brown Creeper, great looks at a semi-hidden Red-naped Sapsucker, Bridled Titmouse, Black

Phoebe, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. A couple of us had fleeting looks at an American Kestrel, and maybe a late Common Black-Hawk, and others, Chipping Sparrow and Bewick's Wren. One of the Sycamore Creek turnoffs, also on the west side of the highway, which follows the old paved two-lane State Route 87, let us take a walk along the road, as well as on a dirt path by fenced property. It was here we studied and discussed the races of Dark-eyed Junco (Gray-headed and Oregon), and saw bluebirds that we agreed had to be Eastern. I was hesitant to confirm the latter species, as I had never seen them this far north in the state, but between our field guides, and participant's knowledge of comparison, I did leave them on our list as Eastern Bluebirds. Our final stop in early afternoon was across the highway, and three miles up the Mt. Ord road, to the Forest Service Road 1688. The principal bird seen along this walk was a Hairy Woodpecker, of which we had long great views. Two of us that stayed behind from our walk saw a Hermit Thrush. The field trip resulted in a very satisfying outing for all.

Your 2008 MAS Board 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 1, 2008. (No fooling!) 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:

Doug Green, chairman, (480) 998-5638

Dr. Mel Bramley, member (480) 969-9893

Suzanne Steadman, member, (480) 966-9483

Birds in Decline and Shade Coffee

Bob Witzeman

"Never doubt that a small group of committed people can change the world: indeed, it is the only thing which ever has." —Margaret Mead (1901-1978)

The National Audubon Society/American Bird Conservancy (NAS/ABC) 2007 "WatchList" was a wake up call. Arizona's "red listed" WatchList birds included: Lewis's Woodpecker, Bendire's Thrasher, Black-chinned Sparrow, Baird's Sparrow, Gilded Flicker, Bell's Vireo (hard to believe), and Mountain Plover. Of course Yuma Clapper Rail, California Condor, Mexican Spotted Owl, Thick-billed Parrot, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher were included.

However, longtime Arizona birders were surprised to see Bell's Vireo added to the "red list" and Abert's Towhee (was it second clutch cowbird predation?) and Lucy's Warbler to the less threatened NAS/ABC "yellow list" category.

Arizona's unique and highly vulnerable population of Desert-Nesting Bald Eagles was not listed even though only some 40 nesting pairs exist in the world. Sadly, Bush and red state politics here appear to have prevailed.

How valid were the NAS/ABC conclusions? They were based on citizen volunteers who participated over decades of 25-mile USFWS breeding bird surveys and Christmas Counts. My wife and I and countless Arizona birders participated in these counts over years here. There appear to be no reason to challenge the citizen science data. However, the criteria used to draw conclusions from that data will doubtless be debated. Let me hear your thoughts on these "WatchList" conclusions.

Breeding/wintering "yellow listed" birds in Arizona included: Clark's Grebe, Long-billed Curlew, Snowy Plover, Swainson's Hawk, Scaled Quail, California Black Rail, Arizona Woodpecker, Elf Owl, Flammulated Owl, Short-eared Owl, Blue-throated Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Elegant Trogon, Williamson's Sapsucker, Arizona Woodpecker, Pinyon Jay, Gray Vireo, LeConte's Thrasher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Thick-billed Kingbird, Grace's Warbler, Virginia's Warbler, Lucy's Warbler, Red-faced Warbler, Abert's Towhee, Sprague's Pipit, Lark Bunting, Varied Bunting, Brewer's Sparrow, Sage Sparrow, Rufous-winged Sparrow, Five-striped Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, Scaled Quail, Montezuma Quail, Mexican Chickadee, and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

The decline in most of these songbirds was not a surprise to those who have participated in repeated Christmas Counts

and Breeding Bird Surveys over past decades. Likewise, avid birders who regularly observe (1) U.S. and/or local spring and fall migrations, (2) local breeding birds, and (3) local over-wintering birds have long expected steep declines in Arizona and North American birds.

For example, over-wintering sparrows have declined precipitously (Brewer's, Vesper, Savannah, White-crowned, Lark) on Arizona's Christmas Counts. Drought in Arizona may account for some of that decline, but loss of breeding habitat from oil and gas drilling etc. in nesting areas north of here, and winter/summer grazing, mining, logging and developmental disruptions have taken their toll.

The impact of the destruction of the winter habitat of U.S. Neotropical migrants in Latin America is an anxiety to anyone who has regularly birded during spring/fall migrations. A visit to Central America's "sun coffee" plantations reveals "shade coffee" plantations as one culprit.

Traditionally, coffee trees were protected from the sun by a canopy of tall trees which shaded the short coffee trees. This provided outstanding habitat for the over-wintering neotropicals. The canopy trees selected were nitrogen-fixing species. This avoided the need



for artificial fertilizer for the understory of coffee trees. Birds within this canopy of trees, many U.S. migratory species, protected the coffee plants from harmful insects.

But the introduction of "sun coffee," ironically introduced by "U.S. Aid" programs, required the application of commercial fertilizers and insecticides by growers. These row crop, sun coffee plantations also required mechanized tractor cultivation. They were no longer operated by small, family-owned shade coffee growers.

One can help protect the habitat of

North American Neotropical migrants by avoiding the purchase of sun coffee. Here are places to obtain shade coffee:

1. The American Birding Association at ABASales.com (800-634-7736). ABA provides "Thanksgiving" brand 100% shade coffee. ABA is also a great place for binoculars, telescopes, and bird books. ABA sales proceeds go to bird conservation and education.

2. Mainstream groceries: Safeway, Albertson's, Basha's, Frys etc. sell primarily sun coffee. However, if one searches carefully, these stores usually sell at least one brand labeled "organic." Organic coffee is usually shade coffee because large amounts of pesticides and fertilizer are required for sun coffee.

3. Specialty groceries: Wild Oats, Sunflower Markets, Whole Foods, and Sprouts offer organic shade coffees. One may even find "shade coffee" on the label.

If it is not organic, but the package has the logo "Fair Trade Certified," that signifies some of the profits went to the small, local farmers who grew shade coffee. Small farmers generally do not grow sun coffee as they are unable to afford costly fertilizers, pesticides, and mechanized row crop cultivation.

Shade coffee in the traditional round, metal coffee can is rare. However, if you must have your coffee in a can, seek out the Yuban brand coffee can which is labeled "Rainforest Alliance Certified." It is available in most mainstream stores. Yuban concedes that their coffee is only 30% fair traded (or shade coffee) in content, but this is definitely progress.

Knowing where your coffee is grown helps. Coffee from Mexico is likely to be shade coffee. As one moves south through Central America toward Columbia sun coffee becomes more predominant. Columbia is the worst. Avoid coffee boasting it is "Columbian." It is likely sun coffee.

Besides rainforest degradation from sun coffee, large amounts of Neotropical rainforest have been replaced with crops of palm oil trees, bananas, pineapples etc. Palm oil plantations are not only replacing Orangutan-inhabiting rainforest in Southeast Asia, but songbird rainforests in our Neotropics. Many avoid foods with palm oil because palm oil plantations are destroying and replacing rainforests. This message hasn't reached "Newman's Own" food products which purport to be environmentally aware. Ironically they boast the use of "palm nut oil" in many of their products.



Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

Though the recent trend in hawk identification guides is toward photography, many of the photographs I see in these books depict birds that are quite small in the frame or have shadowed or underexposed undersides. Many of these images require a leap of faith on the part of the user who may or may not be able to discern from the photo what the author is describing. For my money the best raptor specific guidebook out there is still William S. Clark and Brian K. Wheeler's Peterson Field Guide, Hawks, published by Houghton Mifflin 20 years ago. The photographs are not that helpful, but the color paintings of both perched and soaring hawks are spot on and spectacular.

It is my humble opinion that one of the drawbacks of most field guides for hawks is that raptor experts are not good bird photographers and good bird photographers are not raptor experts. Though I certainly can't lay claim to either of these labels, I've taken enough bad photographs of raptors passing overhead that I recognize the occasional good one I luck into. This photo quiz spotlights three of my lucky ones. For our identification purposes, these three photos are all good.

A)--Good photo, easy bird

There are three reasons why this should be the easiest of the three photos to identify: it is the most common raptor overhead at any season in Arizona; because of that it is your baseline buteo, the starting point from which you begin any raptor identification process; and it has been the subject of this photo quiz on at least two previous occasions, the most recent just last winter.

Although at first glance all buteos may appear to be cut from the same template, subtle differences in shape can be helpful if underpart patterns are hard to see or have escaped your memory. Here we have a hawk with broad, rounded wings pushed forward from the "wrist" out. This gives the impression that our first quiz bird is shorter winged and stockier than, for example, our second.

The easily discernable pattern here is a dark head and neck, thick, dark patagial bars on the inner leading edge of the wings, a dark belly band, and a lightly banded light undertail tail with a thicker, dark subterminal band. If you've followed our past quizzes, you know the dark patagial

bars are the defining diagnostic feature for all light and intermediate morph Red-tailed Hawks. This adult, light morph Red-tail was photographed over the Gilbert Riparian Area in October, 2006.

As we've discussed before, all Red-tails do not have red tails. Typically the tails on young birds will show dark banding on a white background both top and bottom. Adult western birds such as this one will still show the banding from underneath, but from above the tail will appear unbanded and rich, rufous red. We know this bird is an adult from the dark band along the trailing edge of the wings. The color slide shows a warm, reddish cast to the bird's light underparts, including the undertail. Adult eastern Red-tails do not show banding like this in the undertail.

B)--Good photo, difficult bird

Our next photo, with the bird in almost exactly the same flight position as the Red-tailed, shows off some of the subtle shape differences between buteo species in flight. This bird's wings are decidedly longer, narrower, straighter, and more pointed. The overall appearance is that of a larger hawk and, indeed, our second quiz bird is our largest buteo.

The pattern we see here is a strikingly white underside, the key diagnostics being the dark commas at the wrist, the dark "V" on the belly formed by the dark leg feathering, and the unmarked white tail. These three features combine to identify this as an adult light morph Ferruginous Hawk. Though the patagial area shows dark feathering, this is not a Red-tail. Light Ferruginies can have wedge-shaped, splotchy dark patches on the leading edge of the underwing, but these are not the neat, uninterrupted dark bars of our Red-tails.

Even on most dark morph Ferruginous Hawks, the dark wrist comma will show up, offset from the dark underwing coverts by a crescent of white. From above, the unbanded, pale tail of this hawk may have a reddish tint, but it will never show the deep, rich red of an adult Red-tailed's tail. Like Red-taileds, Ferruginous Hawks will kite, hovering over perceived movement in a field below, waiting to see if prospective prey will reveal itself. This Ferruginous Hawk was photographed in Arizona's Sulphur Springs Valley in December, 2001.

C)--Good photo, difficult bird

The folded tail and slightly bent wings of our third hawk in flight indicate it is not in full soar like our first two quiz birds, but flying over faster, going somewhere on a mission rather than just reconnoitering. Nonetheless this photo is diagnostic for the species. This hawk's shape appears more similar to Red-tail than Ferruginous. Though it is heavily spotted and obviously not as light as a Ferruginous, it appears lighter overall than our first quiz bird.

Once again we can eliminate Red-tailed because dark patagial bars are absent. In comparison to the commas at the wrist of both the Red-tailed and the Ferruginous, this third photo shows us large, dark patches in the carpal area. These are the single most diagnostic feature for underside views of Rough-legged Hawk, a buteo which typically has longer, straighter wings than Red-tails, wings which broaden out at the tip.

This Rough-legged, photograph near Mormon Lake in March, 2003, is an adult male light morph individual. We know it is an adult because the dark trailing edge of the wings extends all the way from body to primaries. We know it is a male because the breast is as heavily marked as the belly and the white tail has one dark subterminal band and at least one narrower band. In most female Rough-legs, the belly markings are darker and more solid, often coalescing into a continuous band, and the white female tail shows a wider dark subterminal band than the male's, laid over a dirty terminal background. Other underside characteristics to help distinguish Rough-leggeds are the black primary tips and the light "U" which separates the chest markings from the belly markings. This "U" will be white on males, cream to buff on females and immature birds.

Discussion of these light morph individuals begs the question about identifying dark morph birds of these three species. Dark morph Red-taileds, though not uncommon, are less common than light and intermediate birds. Dark morphs make up only a small percentage of the Ferruginous population. Dark morph Rough-leggeds, though as rare as dark Ferruginies in the west, are much more commonly seen in the east. Maybe a future quiz!

Bathing Beauties: A Hummingbird Truce

Tom Gatz (Modified and reprinted from an article in *The Gatherings*, the newsletter of the volunteers at the Desert Botanical Garden)

At dawn for the past several winters the Desert Botanical Garden staff and volunteers have witnessed communal bathing by hummingbirds. This sunrise show only lasts a half hour or so, but what we see on most (but inexplicably, not all) mornings is a frenzy of bathing activity by a swarm of hummingbirds, up to 10 at one time. The normally pugnaciously territorial male hummingbirds appear to grudgingly suspend hostilities for a few precious minutes while they bathe like crazy in the frigid dawn, tolerating the presence of several other males just inches away. Most are Anna's Hummingbirds, but a few Costa's Hummingbirds show up, and, twice last December, I observed a reddish-brown hummingbird in the genus *Selasphorus*; the species in this genus are normally down in Mexico by this time of year.

Why they bathe together during the coldest part of the day remains a mystery to me and to several ornithologists I contacted, but all agree cleaning, oiling and preening their plumage is important in maintaining the flexibility and insulation in their feathers. Good insulation is so critical to such tiny bundles of energy, especially after reviving from the lower body temperatures of the self-induced, hibernation-like torpor required to survive the coldest nights. Group bathing by hummingbirds is apparently unusual enough that Dr. Stephen Trombulak

published his observations of group bathing behavior by Blue-

the scenes" in back of the Horticulture building. One December morning I



Hummingbirds bathing at dawn at the Desert Botanical Garden.
Photo by Tom Gatz

vented Hummingbirds in the dry forest of Costa Rica during the dry season in the journal *Condor* (1985. 85:495-496). He suggests that by aggregating, bathing hummingbirds may increase the likelihood that a predator will be detected while in a

wet, vulnerable condition and sound the alarm.

Several fountains in the Garden that are frequented by bathing hummingbirds include the one on the cross-cut trail just south of the

old cactus house and the one in the entry arbor. The premiere fountain, however, is the water feature "behind

counted a procession of 30 bathing hummingbirds at this fountain, though some may be birds returning for a second or third plunge. These fountains benefit other Garden wildlife as well. While patrolling one night, Ranger Andrea Denning was startled to come upon a large Great-horned Owl perched on the entry arbor fountain. Horticulturalist Chad Davis often sees hummingbirds bathing on the wing in the spray of the Garden sprinklers. Others have reported them coming in to bath near waterfalls and even on wet lawns. I remember vividly my first observation of a bathing hummingbird. It was a Fork-tailed Emerald along a forest trail in Eastern Mexico, with a rain-filled depression in a large leaf serving as its lilliputian bathtub. In your yard you may be able to attract hummingbirds to a re-circulating fountain with shallow water flowing gently over



Bathing Beauties: A Hummingbird Truce

a flat rock. The depth, sound and movement of water appear to be the key ingredients. If you have observed multiple hummingbirds bathing communally, please drop me a line at tommygatz@cox.net.

Some Anna's Hummingbirds are nesting now. The earliest recorded fledging of young was November 16 in Mesa. The 2 eggs must have been laid in early October since incubation takes about 2 weeks and fledging takes



about another 3 weeks. In most years, some females are incubating eggs by December and fledging young in January and often raise a second brood after that. Once courtship and mating are done, the males become

deadbeat dads and leave everything from nest-building to incubating eggs and feeding the young to the females. Perhaps the

boys are just too busy primping (and fighting) after their morning shower?

Amazingly, the Anna's Hummingbird, now the most common breeding species of hummingbird in the Phoenix area, didn't even nest in Arizona until 1962. Once confined to coastal California and Mexico, this species has apparently taken advantage of the widely cultivated urban and suburban exotic flowering plants and greatly expanded its breeding range north to Canada and east to Texas. It's nice to know that human activities are benefiting species other than starlings and pigeons.

Compassion vs. Strength

Jennifer Lancaster

the hawk flies with an instinctive mission
that gives him the strength to survive;
the patience to find food
to be fearless as he dives from out of the sky...
for a tiny field mouse that's fast and can hide.
he has strength in his conviction
that he will succeed.
the hawk's strength manifests itself
through the expansion of his wings.
the tiny field mouse hasn't a chance...
its own strength limited
from fear of the hawks dance.
the power, the determination, the strength
from the hawks eyes...
seemingly paralyzes the field mouse's cry.

Monthly Meetings--*November meeting is canceled*

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, 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, the location to be announced. The DBG is located at 1201 N. 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. 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 (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information

There are two ways to become a Maricopa Audubon member and to receive the Cactus Wren*dition by mail:

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to Jack Follett, membership chair, and he will send it on in to National Audubon for you, or
2. By becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and you will not receive the Audubon magazine or any of the other "benefits" of National Audubon membership, but you will receive a one-year subscription to the Cactus Wren*dition. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$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. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Jack Follett, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated 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")

For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail Jack Follett.

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.

Reprinting of material

Unless stated explicitly in the article, material in The Cactus Wren*dition may be reprinted on other newsletters as long as the material is credited to the original author and to The Cactus Wren*dition.

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