



The Cactus Wren-Dition

Fall 2003 • Volume 29, No. 3

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This pair of **Cordilleran Flycatchers** was photographed near Sprung Spring above Madera Canyon in July, 2003 by **Jim Burns** with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens, 1.4x tele extender, 12mm extension tube, and Canon flash on Fujichrome Velvia film

PROGRAMS

September 2003 through May 2004

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month, September-April, at the Phoenix Zoo Auditorium. Meetings start at 7:30, and feature a speaker, book sales, refreshments, and a chance to socialize with fellow MAS members. Visitors welcome!

Join us for a pre-meeting dinner at Pete's 19th Tee, 1405 N Mill Avenue, Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) starting at 6:00 p.m. Meals average about \$5.00 with a variety of choices on the menu. Join us!

For our first meeting of the year in September there will be no pre-meeting dinner at Pete's. It is our annual potluck. Each attendee is invited to bring a platter of his or her favorite h'ors d'oeuvres, sufficiently large enough to serve at least six people. We'll provide the eating utensils, the plates, and the drinks (non-alcoholic, of course). Bring a friend. Festivities will start at 6:30p.m. at the zoo, when we'll be able to tell one another where we had an opportunity to go birding this past summer, and what lifers we got. The regular meeting will get underway at 7:30 p.m.

Join us for a season of dynamic speakers and captivating topics! Visit Iceland, Alaska, Peru, Mexico and Arizona to see our favorite creatures and their associated environments. Learn to identify birds in the field by their sounds, get close-up and personal with digital photography, view habitat restoration along the Santa Cruz River, experience Arizona's sky island ecosystems and discover major conservation efforts throughout the state. Wow! and if that isn't enough to whet your interest, our banquet speaker for May 2004 is Kenn Kaufman!

To conserve space, only a short list of our speakers and topics is included in this edition of the newsletter. A summary of each speaker's topic will be available on our website (www.maricopaaudubon.org) and in the next Wren-dition. Have a safe and birdy summer - we'll see you all next September!

PROGRAM TOPICS

September 2, 2003

David Reesor
"Birds of Iceland"

October 7, 2003

David and Jen MacKay
"Birds and Natural History of Northwestern Mexico"

November 4, 2003

Kathy Groschupf
"Identifying Bird Sounds in the Field"

December 2, 2003

Gary Rosenberg
"Digital Photography Through a Telescope: A Tour Leader's Travels from Alaska to Peru"

January 6, 2004

Ann Phillips and Kendall Kroesen
Along the Santa Cruz River: Its Birds and Reconstruction Efforts"

February 3, 2004

Peter Friederici
"Those Exotic, Thick-billed Parrots of the Sierra Madre"

March 2, 2004

Bob Witzeman
"Sky Islands of Arizona: Their Life Zones and Birds"

April 6, 2004

Pat Graham
"The Nature Conservancy in Arizona: Past Present and Future"

From The Editor

By Deva Burns

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I am just returned from a family reunion on the beach north of San Diego. The Arkansas Burnses learned how to surf and Jim and I learned . . . how to survive under the water with a heavy board attached to our ankles. The best part of this trip was reconnecting with relatives who live halfway across the country and having all three grandchildren together again. And I caught up on a lot of reading. Office colleagues remarked about how rested and relaxed I looked when I returned to work.

One author whose acquaintance I made on the beach is Carl Hiaasen, and I would encourage all of you to look him up. Highlighted in

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

New National Audubon

Members take note: Any claims by National Audubon, or by the local Audubon State Office to the contrary notwithstanding, in becoming a new National Audubon Society member, you will **not** automatically become a subscriber to this local chapter newsletter, the Cactus Wren-dition. You are only receiving this one copy so that you can be made aware of the situation. After October 1, 2003, National Audubon will no longer be sharing a portion of the dues you pay with your local chapter, and, hence, Maricopa Audubon cannot afford to provide you with a subscription to the Wren-dition as a part of your National Audubon membership. To become an ongoing subscriber, you must become a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon"! For a yearly renewable subscription to the Wren-dition, it will be necessary for you to send a donation of \$20.00 or more to Maricopa Audubon Society, c/o Herb Fibel, Treasurer, 1128 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282-3940, indicating that you wish to become a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon".

Needed—Book Store

Volunteers!—If you are interested, contact any Board Member.

Tucson Audubon to donate \$25 to MAS for everyone who signs up for their Copper Canyon or Belize trips:

How exciting! A fabulous bird tour and a donation to MAS! Copper Canyon is scheduled for October 7-16, 2003 and January 24-February 1, 2004. On their past trips they have seen Eared Trogons and Russet-Crowned Motmots. The Belize trip is scheduled for February 14-24, 2004. For detailed itineraries and a list of past birds seen on these trips, please see www.tucsonaudubon.org or www.naturetreks.net. Rochelle Gerratt can be reached at (520) 696-2002 or at rochelle@naturetreks.net.

National Audubon Chair is elected:

Carol M. Browner, the longest serving administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, has been elected chair of the National Audubon Society Board of Directors. Browner will be the first woman to chair Audubon, and is one of few women to hold such a position at a major conservation organization. Browner will replace Donal C. O'Brien when he retires this fall after having served 12 years as Audubon Chair. Browner joined the Audubon Board in 2001 and currently oversees its Public Policy Committee.

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts

For information, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@hotmail.com

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

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 16-19, 2004:

Migrate to one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots and join the Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the 8th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. For more information about the Festival, check out our website at www.morro-bay.net/birds, where you can request that your name be added to the mailing list for our 2004 brochure, due out in October. Registration deadline is December 31, 2003 and early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

The Birdseye Guide to 101

Birding Sites, Phoenix: A guide published by Rupp Aerial Photography. The maps are excellent, it is all in color and is \$23.95. For more information check www.ruppaerialphoto.com.

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.

More birding and nature

festivals. www.americanbirding.org . and www.birdinghotspot.com .

Audubon Adventures: Give the gift of discovery and share your love of the environment. The program is designated for students in grades 4-6. Introduce an entire classroom (up to 32 students) to the wonders of nature for just \$35 (plus shipping charges). You can select your favorite school or let Audubon do it for you. For orders: call 800/813-5037.

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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 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.

Smithsonian Magazine, Hiaasen is a mystery writer primarily known as a columnist for the Miami Herald. He is an unabashed environmentalist who uses his column to relentlessly attack south Florida development and press for the preservation of the Everglades. He has recently begun writing for children and won the Newbery Honor for his novel *Hoot*—the story of three youngsters who fight to save a Burrowing Owl site from development. This book will be our birthday gift to our two grandsons who were first introduced to Burrowing Owls by Jim along the Greenbelt in Scottsdale a couple years ago.

And here is a confession. A non-hunter like many of you, until I read the June issue of *Winging It*, the monthly newsletter of the American Birding Association, I thought the Duck Stamp only benefited Duck Hunters. It is only logical, of course, that protecting wetlands is beneficial to all wetland wildlife. And, like many of you, some of my earliest birding adventures came in our National Wildlife Refuges. The Duck Stamp also provides entry to any of the refuges that charge admission. Please purchase your Duck Stamps in this 100th anniversary year of our National Wildlife Refuges system. They can be purchased at the refuges, at the post office, and at some national sporting goods stores.

This *Wren-dition* has a plethora of interesting and informative articles. Are you still on the fence about the role of fire in forestry? Read Charles Babbitt. Can you name just one native Arizona fish species? Read Laurie Nessel. What is an IBA? Just another acronym? Read Scott Wilbor. Disappointed that another fall shorebirding season goes by without any close shorebirding sites? Read Mike Rupp. And, speaking of shorebirds, how did you do on this issue's Photo Quiz? Think I can ever convince Jim to bird outside this country? Read Gary Markowski and Julie Craves' article about birding in Cuba.

Be sure to check out our website at www.maricopaaudubon.org !

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50th GALA AT SHALIMAR

Actually the celebration was two months premature, since our chapter was organized in July 1953, but who's counting? After a happy hour to quench our thirsts, and an excellent buffet which satisfied our nutritional needs, our genial emcee and president, Laurie Nessel, introduced our special guests, and our past chapter presidents in attendance-Bix Demaree, Bob Witzeman, Charles Babbitt, Scott Burge, and Herb Fibel.

The nominating committee presented its slate of candidates, which was hauntingly familiar. The only change from the previous year was Joanne Hilliard, who had volunteered, albeit reluctantly, to replace outgoing secretary, Teri Sullivan. The slate was elected by acclamation. President Nessel then presented plaques to Teri Sullivan and to Richard and Karen Kaiser, the latter for their many years of service in book sales.

State director, Sam Campana, then congratulated the chapter and its accomplishments, and presented us with a tree, which will be planted at the new nature center at Central and the Salt River. Michell Fulton, our webmistress, received an award in appreciation for her service and dedication.

Bix Demaree, a charter member of Maricopa Audubon, who symbolizes our fifty years of success as advocates for saving birds, other wildlife, and their habitats, was regaled with reminiscences of her many contributions to our chapter's activities by past treasurer Eileen Fulmer, past membership chair Liz Hatcher, Scott Burge, Charles Babbitt, Janet Witzeman and Polly Schmidt.. She was then presented with a gorgeous framed print of three yellow warblers.

Sig Stangelund won the raffle of the compact binoculars. We are indebted to Keith Mellon of Wild Bird Center for providing the grand prize to us at a substantial discount.

Appropriate for the occasion was Dan Fischer's program presentation of Arizona's earliest state mappers and bird chroniclers. Thanks, Dan, too, for providing us with a copy of your new book: [Early Ornithologists-On the Trail of Pioneering Birders](#), as a raffle prize.

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LARGE DONATION RECEIVED

By Herb Fibel

Maricopa Audubon is profoundly grateful to the anonymous person or persons who just donated \$5,000 to us to use for the ongoing publication of the Cactus Wren-dition. Thank you, thank you, thank you, whoever you are. On the same subject, please bear with your editor and with your board while we endeavor to publish and distribute to you the same high quality newsletter, or one of even higher quality, if possible, while seeking ways to reduce the cost per person of the Wren-dition. For your information we now have about 230 "Friends of Maricopa Audubon". This issue will be going out to each of you, plus to our "comps" and on a one-time-only basis to all brand new members of NAS assigned to our chapter.

NAS PROXIES

By Herb Fibel

If you are still a member of National Audubon, before the next issue of the Wren-dition comes to you in the mail, you will be receiving in the mail, or inside your Audubon magazine, a voting proxy from National Audubon, granting authority to NAS President Flicker and/or others on the National Audubon board to vote in your behalf at the annual meeting of members next December. Last year President Flicker used these approximately 37,000 proxies, received from Audubon members like you, to defeat a series of Motions and Resolutions

presented by a group of chapter people, whose goal was to democratize the NAS board election process, and grant more recognition to the contribution of chapters to the Audubon organization. I personally request that when you receive your proxy form from NAS that you simply trash it. Hopefully, in the next Wren-dition we will present an alternative proxy to you as we did last year, but we don't have the requisite information to present a proxy for your consideration by the deadline for this edition of the Wren-dition.

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FALL - 2003 PHOTO QUIZ

By Jim Burns

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE—Shorebirds are on their way. The big ones are usually easier than the "peeps." These three photographs were all taken in Arizona.



A) Good Photo, Easy Bird



B) Good Photo, Difficult Bird



C) Bad Photo, Easy Bird

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FOREST NOTES

By Charles Babbitt

This summer's Aspen fire in the Catalina mountains near Tucson has burned 70,000 acres mostly in mixed conifer and ponderosa pine habitat. The area was probably long overdue for a major fire. It is thought that stand replacing fires occurred naturally in the mixed conifer forests of Southeastern Arizona every 20-30 years. Decades of fire suppression have disrupted the natural fire cycle leaving forest floors clogged with excess fuels ready to explode during periods of drought.

Fire and bark beetle infestation remind us that we remain in the grip of a severe drought. If these conditions persist or worsen it is reasonable to expect major fires in virtually all of Arizona's mountain ranges in the coming years. If global warming continues, we may live to see significant shifts and changes in vegetative distribution.

Contrary to public perception, big fires like the Rodeo-Chediski and Aspen fires do not burn through the forest leaving a large swath of lifeless destruction. Photographs and visits to the Rodeo-Chediski fire and preliminary views of the Aspen fire show typical fire behavior that leaves behind an irregular mosaic of burned and unburned forest. Fires burn random holes into the forest and leave behind islands, stringers and blocks of unburned trees.

We sometimes forget that our forests evolved with fire and that they need fire to remain healthy. On a recent visit to the Pumpkin Fire (2000) and the Hochdoeffler Fire (1996) north of Flagstaff many signs of change and recovery can already be seen although those fires are less than a decade old. Young aspen trees are springing up and ground vegetation is thriving because of increased sunlight. Standing burned snags provide ideal habitat for bird and insect species. Looking down on the Leroux Fire (2001) from the San Francisco Peaks one can see holes burned into the forest by the fire. These new mountain meadows will slowly fill in with a succession of plants and trees until a new fire cycle repeats the process. Fires do not destroy forests, they change them.

The Bush administration and its allies in congress are using fire and the threat of fire as an excuse to gut environmental laws in order to facilitate the commercial logging of our remaining big trees and old growth forests. The Bush backed McInnis bill dubbed the "Healthy Forest Restoration Act" recently passed the house and is now awaiting action by the senate. Among other things, the bill allows agencies to ignore environmental alternatives to their fuel reduction projects. For that matter, it does even require a "no action" alternative, something fundamental to the NEPA-EIS process. The bill reduces opportunity for public comment, eliminates the right to appeal hazardous fuel projects and imposes limitations on judicial review and injunctive relief. Because of its broad and vague definitions the bill's provisions arguably reach most Forest Service and BLM lands. While the Bush administration pushes forward with logging projects, legitimate forest thinning and fuel reduction projects next to fire vulnerable communities go unfunded

Did you ever wonder why logging companies want big fire-resistant ponderosa pine trees so badly? A ponderosa pine 120 feet tall with a diameter of 24 inches can be cut up into 1,350 board feet of lumber. In Arizona almost 95% of our big old ponderosa pine trees have been cut down and hauled off to saw mills. Ponderosa pines can grow 150 feet high with diameters up to 4 feet and live 400 to 500 years. A tree with yellow bark is at least 120 years old. As the tree ages the fire-resistant bark plates begin to smooth out. Red-naped Sapsuckers prefer the smooth bark of old trees drilling rows of holes to collect sap and insects. They are just one of many bird and mammal species that depend on these forest giants and their interlocking crowns.

IF FISH COULD FLY (OR A FISH STORY)

By Laurie Nessel

In much of the West, the value of leaving water in the river to sustain native fisheries or for recreation is often vastly greater than that of the beef produced with the same amount of water... yet we regularly sacrifice the fish to produce beef... George Wuerthner, Welfare Ranching, 2003

As I gaze at the stained glass window I made 15 years ago, inspired by a hike in Aravaipa Canyon, I cringe at the incongruous fish looming in the foreground. Below the flicker, Mariposa lily and other native species, I plopped a striped bass. My ignorance of native fish at the time was hardly unique. Even today, few Arizonans, anglers included, can name one native fish. These fish face an upstream battle. What had taken millennia to evolve is being wiped out in mere decades.

Like many of you, I was attracted to birds because of their beautiful plumage, song and visibility. Learning about their amazing behavior and survival adaptations added to the allure. Fish are largely inaccessible, making them difficult to study and enjoy. But they are no less remarkable than birds and they share some similarities. Some species acquire bright breeding colors to their already dazzling, iridescent scales. They glide gracefully and effortlessly like a hawk on the wing, school like a flock of waxwings, and turn as abruptly as do hummingbirds. Some, such as the Colorado pikeminnow, even migrate. Fish require varied habitats, in water that ranges from turbulent to placid, slightly salty or fresh, silty or clear. Some can withstand extreme variations in temperature, flow, elevation and quality. Some are voracious predators, others mostly vegetarian. They have courtship displays and build nests (depressions in pebbly river bottoms called "redds"). Males of some species aggressively defend territory and young. Some fish are diurnal and others, such as the Desert sucker, are nocturnal-possibly evolved to evade Blackhawks and Zone-tails. Different body shapes are adapted to different stream characteristics-turbulent or laminar flow, calm pools, sandy or rocky bottoms. They have superb senses of smell (like the Turkey vulture) and sight and use hearing to detect predators and to seek prey and mates.

Their lifespans range from several years for the desert pupfish, to over 40 years for the Bonytail. The desert pupfish is among the smallest at 1 1/2" while the Colorado pikeminnow, the largest N. American minnow, reaches nearly 6 feet in length and can weigh 100 pounds. Fish change morphology in response to environment, like the Willow ptarmigan. Adult Roundtail chubs vary from 6"-25.5". The speckled dace are rounded, speckled, with large scales in still pools of Aravaipa Creek but elongated, depigmented with small scales and long fins in turbid Paria River.

The Longfin dace, the most widely

until the 1980's very little are known of others, and still others became extinct before being described.

Native fish have been pushed toward extinction by water diversion, river channelization, dewatering, habitat degradation, exotic species and other human caused factors. Water diversions have removed over 90% of the river system from Arizona in the last 100 years. Dams interfere with migration and trap sediment that protect banks. Water in desert streams seep into the porous valley floors and is stored near the surface. During dry spells, this water seeps back into the channel creating perennial streams or isolated pools where fish survive. Extensive water pumping drops water tables, strand fish and desiccate eggs and vegetation.

Hundreds of fish, including the endangered Rio Grande silvery minnow, were killed within the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico as water is diverted for agricultural and municipal uses.

Even where natural streams survive, natives are threatened. Aquatic and streamside plants that stabilize banks and provide nutrients and oxygen are trampled by livestock that congregate in streams. They forage on cottonwood and willow saplings, preventing succession (and destroying willow flycatcher habitat). Loss of vegetation minimizes cover for lurking fish and exposes water to sun. This, in turn, creates higher temperatures, more evaporation, greater salinity and concentrated pollution. Streams flow wider, shallower and warmer. Excess nutrients from livestock waste or agricultural runoff combined with warm temperatures cause algae blooms that suffocate fish. Hoof ruts fill with stagnant water forming vector habitat. Trampling also damages the subsurface zoological community, an important food source for fish. Displacement of rocks alters shelter for macroinvertebrates. Stock tanks can drain desert springs.

Logging, road building and intense forest fires inhibit water absorption causing sediment and ash to fill rivers and suffocate fish. 949 Gila chub were removed for their safety from Sabino Creek during the Aspen fire in July.

There are more than twice as many introduced fish species than native in Arizona. Non-native species stocked for game, insect control or as forage, predate, hybridize or outcompete the natives. Bonytail and razorbacks haven't recruited young for 20-30 years due to predation by introduced exotics. The Monkey Spring pupfish

distributed native species, know and seek out the deepest section of a stream and survive in isolated pools when water levels drop. They disperse throughout a drainage when flow recurs. They have been known to survive in minimal water beneath algal mats. Year round spawning increase their chance of survival. The desert pupfish survives from below sea level to 4900'elevation in the upper San Pedro. Pupfish mature rapidly and spring fry can reproduce mid-summer. Topminnows deliver live young!

Arizona's native fish evolved over 5-10 million years to thrive in the harsh, arid desert. They are remarkably adapted to extreme changes in environment, but were not prepared for the drastic events that have occurred over the past century. They are one of the world's most imperiled taxa. Of 36 species, 19 are threatened or endangered. Eight are extirpated. Some of these fish weren't described

and Gila chub, desert springs species, were extirpated within months when largemouth bass were introduced. There being no other known location of Monkey Springs pupfish, this species is our first casualty. Other devastating exotics include Giant salvinia, a water fern, New Zealand mudsnails, crayfish and Whirling disease, a parasite that attacks native trout.

What can be done? We can advocate for the protection and restoration of habitat. Refugium habitats can protect populations of native fish and provide stock for reintroductions. Check out the refugia at The Phoenix Zoo, Desert Botanical Gardens and Boyce Thompson Arboretum.

A June survey of the Salt River found the flathead catfish population had plummeted, most likely suffocated by runoff from the Rodeo-Chediski fire. Their demise creates

[\(Continued on Page 7\)](#)

FIELD TRIP REVIEW - COON & CHERRY CREEKS, SUNDAY, MAY, 2003

By Richard Kaiser

I always enjoy traveling and exploring a previously unvisited area of our state, especially for birdwatching. Coon and Cherry Creeks, offered as a Maricopa Audubon Society trip, was new to me. Our leader, Michael Plagens, was familiar with this area as he has birded here extensively and this was his Breeding Bird Atlas area. These creeks form lovely riparian spots in the Tonto National Forest on the border of the Sierra Ancha Wilderness, north of Globe, in an otherwise standard Sonoran Desert landscape.

I arrived in the Coon Creek area with Michael and Daniela Yellan at sunset. As we set up camp, we heard Northern Cardinal, Cassin's Kingbird, and Lucy's Warbler. Perhaps one of the best birds of our weekend trip was heard after dinner. We pursued the call of an owl, it's identification eluding us. Walking along the road, we followed the consistent call, and finally were successful in shining lights on an Elf Owl.

We began soon after dawn on Sunday morning and our birding group gradually increased to twelve. For the first half of the morning, we walked along the same road where we had heard and seen the Elf Owl. We also walked along a trail on the other side of Coon Creek. The bird sightings were very good and included Bell's Vireo, Gila Woodpecker, Hooded Oriole, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and Phainopepla. Mourning Doves were abundant throughout our day of birding. A kettle of Turkey Vultures soaring overhead at one time included one Zone-tailed Hawk. A few rather common species were seen by only a few or one member(s) of our group: Black-throated Sparrow, Northern Mockingbird, White-winged Dove, Lesser Goldfinch, and Curve-billed Thrasher. A few more species on our day's list were only heard, often by only one person: Verdin, Hutton's Vireo, Inca Dove (surprising for this area), and Cactus Wren. Warblers were rather common, and it was nice to see a beautiful Townsend's Warbler, Wilson's Warblers with their black caps, numerous Yellow Warblers, as well as a Black-throated Gray Warbler. A few Yellow-rumped Warblers, and the common desert species, Lucy's Warbler were also seen. Color was prevalent from many Summer Tanagers (males and females), one male Hepatic Tanager, and even a brief sighting of a Western Tanager that passed through. Some of us, including myself, had probably our best views ever of a Brown-crested Flycatcher, and the "olive-sided flycatcher" that we painstakingly identified as Western Wood-Pewee, kept on being seen (and questioned) throughout the day. Obviously, it was hard for us to leave this very birdy and lovely area, but Michael had promised us another good birding spot further up the road.

This second area was another beautiful and shady riparian spot. We parked along a road paralleling Cherry Creek. Michael had warned participants in advance that we would do some wading through water. With little reluctance and a rolling up of our pants, our group traipsed through some marshy ground and the creek, until we realized we needed a clearer—and quieter—view of the area for birdwatching. We were rewarded with excellent views of Common Black-Hawks soaring and perching on rocks. Common Ravens also soared overhead. A few White-throated Swifts were identified in flight over the cliffs. But unfortunately, the area had changed since Michael had last visited this stretch of the Creek, and we ran into an impenetrable property fence, which caused us to turn around. But we were still happy from our hawk sightings, as well as admiring the variety of rocks that we walked over, and spotting several funnel spider webs. Back at our vehicles, we had a nice lunch, which was capped off by an unusual, excellent view of a Yellow-breasted Chat!

Only five of us, including Michael and I, decided to continue on along the road for a little more birdwatching. Two more stops, again not far from water, provided some fun bird activity. The two most interesting species were numerous Vermilion Flycatchers (males and females showing courting behavior and carrying nesting material), and another Yellow-breasted Chat. We were excited to also spot a Black-headed Grosbeak. In the area, other birds seen or heard were Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Yellow Warbler, Western Kingbird, and House Finch.

My trip list, for all species heard and seen, was 49. More importantly, this trip showed me a beautiful area to camp, birdwatch, and admire, especially during spring migration!

IF FISH COULD FLY (OR A FISH STORY)

(continued from Page 6)

an opportunity to reintroduce native Sonoran suckers and roundtail chub. APS is decommissioning its Irving power plant and by Dec. 31, 2004,



full flow will be restored to Fossil Creek. Efforts to control invasive species may include erecting barriers downstream and removing exotics currently in the creek.

Experiments to restore natural river conditions on the Colorado failed to benefit native species. Indeed, unless the Glen Canyon Dam is breached, the Colorado will continue to receive cold, clear water suitable for introduced trout but an anathema to native species adapted to turbulent, sediment laden flow.

Several recent federal decisions provide hope. In mid-June, the, 10th Circuit U.S. Court of Appeals upheld a lower court ruling that the federal Bureau of Reclamation must consider the effect on endangered species when it releases water from its reservoirs. This was a hollow victory for the Rio Grande silvery minnow as the BoR continues to allocate water, leaving the Rio Grande to dry. Anger that the court would favor fish over people is misdirected. The issue is how the west is going to manage its finite supply of water while experiencing inexorable growth. In July, the BoR cut 9%, or 90 billion gallons, of Colorado River water to California's Imperial Irrigation District, citing waste. Also in July, a 9th Circuit U.S.Court of Appeals judge ruled that the Forest Service failed t

Photo Quiz Answers

By Jim Burns

Because we don't see shorebirds on any kind of a regular basis here in land-locked Arizona, we become attuned every fall (remember July/August is "fall" on the shorebird calendar) to using our big scopes and meticulously detailed field guides to focus on darting, wheeling flocks of tiny peeps. cursory glances and uninformed expectations for our larger, easier to identify long-legged waders may lead us to miss or misidentify some beautiful, fascinating, and rare migrant shorebirds. Let's tune into them with this quiz.

A)—Good photo, easy bird

Well, this is certainly no peep. This is a large shorebird with rather plain, unmarked plumage but a visually spectacular structure. The structural features that leap from the image are the obviously long legs and the amazingly long, scimitar shaped bill which appears jointed or notched at the tip.

Few of our North American bird species are as aptly named as the Long-billed Curlew and, given a head profile such as we have here, few are as readily recognizable. Long-billed Curlew is our largest shorebird, some females measuring over two feet in length, the bill itself nearly a foot long. The name "curlew" comes to us from the French imitation of their haunting, two syllable flight call, and the genus name, *Numenius*, comes from the Greek word for new moon, crescent shaped like the curlew's decurved bill.

There are, nonetheless, some identification caveats. Curlews are often seen feeding in wet pastures or flooded fields at distances great enough that bill length and shape might not be readily discernible. In these situations or in the case of a sleeping bird with bill tucked under a wing or at rest against its back, body size and plumage may suggest Whimbrel or Marbled Godwit. Additionally, be aware that juvenile Long-billeds, seen in the fall, can have much shorter bills than adults and thereby in profile can easily resemble Whimbrels.

Behavioral traits dictated by structural differences can offer interesting identification clues for distant birds. Long-billed Curlews, as well as the godwits with their upturned bills, feed more by probing whereas Whimbrels tend to pick rather than probe. The length of the bill and the flexibility of its seemingly jointed tip allow Long-billed Curlews to angle deeply into the soft sediment burrows of crustaceans and worms and open the bill underground to capture these prey items. Think of the tip of this marvelous bill as an inverted spoon capable of tactilely locating food and scooping it toward the tongue.

Willet presents another interesting possibility, assuming of course you don't see the beautiful black and white Willet wing pattern of the bird in flight which would clinch the identification. The Willet bill is about half again the length of its head and it is straight. "Long" and "straight" are relative and at a distance can be hard to judge. This close-up profile, though, shows a bill twice the length of the bird's head, and the upturn is noticeable. In breeding plumage, Willets' scapulars are finely spotted and barred and there is thin flank barring against a white belly—not a description of our photo bird.

Long, thick, and upcurved does describe the bill of our four North American godwits. Bar-tailed, a coastal species, and Black-tailed, an Asian vagrant, have not been recorded in Arizona and are not expected. Marbled Godwit is expected, both spring and fall, and is listed as an "uncommon transient" in Birds Of Phoenix And Maricopa County. It is our largest godwit, nearly the size of a Long-billed Curlew, and so similar in plumage that at a distance, without the proper sight angle of the curlew's sickle shaped bill, the two species can and are often mistaken for one another.

Like Long-billed Curlews, Marbled Godwits appear mottled brown above with fine white speckling and buffy below, with cinnamon wing linings and an unstreaked head. In breeding plumage Marbled Godwits show fine, dark barring on the cinnamon belly, but juveniles passing through in the fall have the same plain, unmarked underparts as Long-billed Curlew. The bill is bright, salmon pink with a dark tip.

What's wrong with this picture? Well, it doesn't fit the above description. What we see in this picture is a godwit bill on a bird that is boldly spotted above with conspicuously wide barring on very dark underparts—a breeding adult, not a juvenile, not a bird expected in the fall, not really a bird expected in Arizona at all. This Hudsonian Godwit was photographed at the Willcox ponds in May, 1996, at that time only the fourth state record, all during spring migration.

C)—Bad photo, easy bird

Many generally accepted principles of good photographic technique take flight when the subject is birds, done in by the unpredictability of that subject. Composition is the most obvious of these and leads to a paraphrasing of the standard aphorism of photographic excellence—"f/8 and be there." With birds it becomes "f/8 and be lucky." You can learn to use your camera and you can learn to find the birds, but you can't learn lucky. Look how pleasing the composition of the first

Field Trips

By Mark Horlings

CAR POOLING

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

LEGEND

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

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

REMINDERS

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

Saturday, August 30 & Sunday, August 31

Ramsay Canyon & Gray Hawk Ranch—Sierra Vista. Two terrific sites near Sierra Vista, each trip led by a professional bird guide. We will meet at 9:00 a.m. Saturday at the Nature Conservancy parking lot. Non-TNC members should bring \$5 for entrance. Expect temperatures in the 80's. Bring a lunch, water, and a poncho or raincoat.

On Sunday, we will be led by Sandy Anderson, doyenne of the Gray Hawk Ranch, who combines a terrific ear with a decade's experience along the San Pedro. A late summer trip in 2002 saw four species of bunting with Sandy. We will break up in the early afternoon for return to Phoenix. Difficulty 2 on Saturday, maybe 3 on Sunday. Limit 15. Call leader for reservations and information.

Leader: Mark Pretti
(520) 378-2640

Phoenix Contact: Mark Horlings
602 279-2238
Mhorlings@aol.com

Saturday, September 27

Haunted Canyon - In the Tonto National Forest, 60 miles east of Phoenix at 3500 feet elevation. Last year's trip saw Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Thrush, and a good variety of migrants. The canyon offers a 95% forest canopy and a perennial stream. We will meet at 6:00 a.m.

Maricopa/Yavapai count line. We will search for shorebirds and fall migrants on the reservoir and late warblers in the mesquite bosques along the river. Bring a lunch and spotting scope if available. Entry fee \$4/vehicle. Limit:15. Difficulty: 2. Call leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Bix Demaree
(602) 992-2252

Saturday, October 25

Granite Reef Dam & Lower Salt River. We will visit the Salt River, below Granite Reef Dam. A traditional favorite, excellent for waterbirds and raptors, with a leader who birds this area frequently. There is a lake entry fee. Bring water, lunch and a scope if available. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Walgreen's parking lot at McKillip and Power (Bush Highway). Contact leader for reservations and information.

Limit: 15
Difficulty: 2

Leader: Charles Saffell
(480) 668-9393;
marisaff@cox.net

Tuesday, November 11

Gilbert Library Ponds. The ponds and surrounding marshes attracting migrating wildfowl, wintering raptors, and passerines. Burrowing owl colonies are well established and easily viewed. Bring a spotting

[Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#)

[Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#)

[Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#)

[Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#) [Photo Quiz Answers](#)

Though typically easier to identify, Arizona's large shorebirds are generally less common and also less approachable than the little peeps we've come to love and curse as we stand in the mud with our scopes and field guides. Save some time this fall to seek out and savor these long-legged beauties and their eye-catching structural anomalies.

10

By Janet Witzeman

Individual Pacific Loons were observed at Lake Havasu Apr. 5 (CB,SS) and at Montezuma Well, n. of Camp Verde May 20 (DG) and was still present there May 28 (RWd,BD,AV). Two late-staying Eared Grebes (usually gone by the end of April) were seen at the Gila Bend sewage ponds May 24 (TC). A Clark's Grebe, observed at Gillespie Dam Apr. 28 (DP) was later than previous records for the county. Am. White Pelicans continued to be seen: two groups of 30 each were seen east of 107th Ave. and the Salt River and west of 115th Ave. and the Gila River Mar. 19 (MR), Mar. 29 (TH), and Apr. 5 (L&KB). Another group of 15, observed at Gillespie Dam Apr. 20 (RWz,SBu), had dwindled to three by May 24 (TC). The three Brown Pelicans that wintered at Tempe Town Lake continued to be seen at least until Mar. 9 and at least two were reported there until Apr. 22 (m.ob.).

One of the 22 Neotropical Cormorants at the Painted Rock Rd. heron rookery was discovered building a nest there May 10 – a new nesting record for Maricopa County (TC). Two Neotropical Cormorants, seen with Double-crested Cormorant at the base of Roosevelt Dam May 10 (JK), were in an area where the species had not been recorded previously. Six pairs of Double-crested Cormorants were found nesting at the Painted Rock Rd. Henry Apr. 19 along with nesting Black-crowned Night Herons, Cattle Egrets, Great Egrets, and Snowy Egrets (MR). An adult **White Ibis** was discovered near Arlington May 10 (DLu,EC) and seen again May 24 at the Cobble Ponds (MP,DY). There have been only two previous county records. A large group of 22 Black Vultures were reported along El Mirage Rd., n. of Southern May 23 (TH).

Two Greater White-fronted Geese were observed on Roosevelt Lake Mar. 1 – 3 (JE). A male Wood Duck was seen Mar. 1 at the Gilbert Water Ranch (DP) where a pair had been reported Feb. 17 (GR). Three late-staying N. Pintails were observed above Gillespie Dam May 24 (TC). Two male Greater Scaup were reported at Bill Williams Delta Apr. 5 (CB,SS). A late-staying male Lesser Scaup was seen at the Gila Bend sewage ponds May 24 (TC). The three White-winged Scoters that wintered below Parker Dam were still present there Apr. 5 (CB,SS). The Long-tailed Duck that wintered at Gila Farms Pond was still present there Apr. 19 (PD). A female Com. Goldeneye was reported at the Gilbert Water Ranch Mar. 1 – 9 (DP) and eight were observed at the Jaeger Pond, Paloma Ranch Mar. 14 (HD). Six very late Com. Mergansers were seen on one of the Apache Trail lakes May 10 (JK). Usually this species is not seen after the end of

Two Bonaparte's Gulls were observed at the Gilbert ponds s. of Ocotillo Rd. Apr. 20 – 25 (PD *et al.*). A Ring-billed Gull, seen at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (hereafter BTA) Mar. 30 (RD,SG), represented only the second record for the Arboretum (CT). On May 10, two Caspian Terns were observed on Tempe Town Lake (DS) and four were counted along the Salt River, s.w. of Phoenix (MR). Numbers of Least Terns have increased in the past six years; two individuals observed this spring brought the total in the county to eleven: one at the Gila Bend sewage ponds May 24 (TC) and one flying over a Lower River Rd. pond, n. of Palo Verde May 25 (JoB).

An unusual lowland record of a Band-tailed Pigeon was of one reported at a golf course in Mesa since at least early May and still present in early June (CS). A Eurasian Collared-Dove, found at BTA May 4 (RD), provided the first record for the Arboretum (CT). Eleven Eurasian Collared-Doves were counted between Palo Verde and Paloma Ranch May 10 (TC), numbers were reported in Yuma Apr. 20 (HD), and increasing numbers were reported in Globe where they have been recorded for the past year (BJ). A Ruddy Ground-Dove was observed in a Sun City yard Apr. 22 – 30 (DLI).

A Flammulated Owl, a Spotted Owl, and a Whip-poor-will (all rare local residents in Maricopa County) were found above Slate Creek Divide May 10 (SG). A Saw-whet Owl (a casual winter visitor at lower elevations) was found roosting in a Scottsdale yard Mar. 8 (*fide* DP). A male Red-naped Sapsucker was still being seen at BTA on the late date of Apr. 21 (CT) and one was seen at the HRP on the very late date of May 10 (NL).

A female "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flicker was observed in a Tempe yard Mar. 1 – 30 (KS).

At least one and possibly two Beardless Tyrannulets were seen at the northern edge of their range at BTA Mar. 9 (TC). An Olive-sided Flycatcher was seen at Seven Springs May 12 (RWd,AV). A Hammond's Flycatcher and a singing Pacific-slope Flycatcher were observed in the riparian area below Lake Pleasant May 18 (TC). The Eastern Phoebe that wintered at the Cobble Ponds was last seen there Mar. 15 (EL). Three Tropical Kingbirds returned May 10 for the third consecutive year to the same area at the HRP where they have been observed previously (NL). The Thick-billed Kingbird that wintered west of Yuma was last seen there Mar. 12 (HD).

A White-eyed Vireo was discovered on the NAU campus in Flagstaff May 14 (JP); there have been fewer than

(Continued from Page 11)

Lake Pleasant Apr. 26 (TC). The male Black-and-white Warbler that wintered at the HRP was still present there Mar. 22 (RWz,SBu). A N. Waterthrush was observed at Morgan City Wash below Lake Pleasant May 18 (TC). An adult male **Kentucky Warbler**, discovered in Tolleson May 9 (BG) represented the fifth record for Maricopa County. A female **Hooded Warbler** (a casual visitor to the county) was found at the Tempe Marsh May 10 (DStu). A Painted Redstart (rare in the lowlands) was observed at Coon Bluff Mar. 30 (L&KB).

Two of the "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows that wintered at BTA were still present there Mar. 9 (TC) and one remained at least until Mar. 31 (CT). A Golden-crowned Sparrow that was found at the Gilbert Water Ranch Apr. 12 (CD,PM,HF) was seen there again on the late date of Apr. 27 (GR). The Pyrrhuloxia that wintered at the Desert Botanical Garden was last seen there Mar. 8 (SBA). An Indigo Bunting (a rare transient in the county) was found at Paloma Ranch May 10 (TC). Yellow-headed Blackbirds were found nesting at the Paloma Ranch (including the Jaeger Pond) and at the new wetlands at the Lewis Prison complex off Hwy 85, May 10 (TC).

Following are highlights from s.e. Arizona during the spring. The Least Grebe, at the Sweetwater Wetlands in Tucson since a year ago May, remained through the period, and a second individual was found at Sam Lena Park in Tucson Apr. 19 and was still present there in early June (m.ob.). A **White-rumped Sandpiper** was discovered at Willcox May 15 (DSj) and remained until May 26 (m.ob.); there have been six previous state records. Unprecedented numbers of Least Terns (at least ten) were reported between Apr. 15 and May 26 (m.ob.). At least two Buff-collared Nightjars were seen and heard at the Oro Blanco Mine site near California Gulch May 8 into June (m.ob.). Lucifer Hummingbirds were reported in Miller Canyon, Ash Canyon, and Portal during April and May, and a male White-eared Hummingbird was in Miller Canyon the last week in May (m.ob.).

A pair of Black-capped Gnatcatchers nested near Patagonia Lake in March and fledged two young in early May (m.ob.). In addition to the five Rufous-backed Robins reported in s.e. Arizona during the winter, four more were observed in different localities during the spring (m.ob.). The male Flame-colored Tanager returned to Miller Canyon Apr. 13 and a pair of Flame-colored Tanagers were observed in Madera Canyon during May (m.ob.). A male Baltimore Oriole was found along the upper San Pedro River May 7 (RJ).

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m.ob.).

Observers: Charles Babbitt, Sally Barnes, Jack Bartley, Linda & Ken Bielek, Scott Burge, Josh Burns, Eleanor Campbell, Troy Corman, Bix Demaree, Henry Detwiler, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Cynthia Donald, Jeff Estis, Herb Fibel, Steve Ganley, Dena Greenwood, Bill Grossi, Tom Hildebrandt, Betty Jackson, Roy Jones, Jim Kopitzke, Eric Latturmer, Dale Litzenberger, Nancy London, Dean Luehrs, Pete Moulton, Dave Pearson, Michael Plagens, John Prather, Gwen Robinson, Mike Rupp, Charles Saffel, Sig Stangeland, David Stejskal, Diana Stuart, Karen Stucke, Carl Tomoff, Anita VanAuken, Russ Widner, Robert Witzeman, Daniela Yellan.

COACHWHIP CHAOS

by Ann McDermott

A female hummingbird zipped about in the bottlebrush tree. Nearby, house sparrows fluttered nervously, then fled their perches in an oleander tree. The hummingbird just wouldn't quit. Her nervous--no, frantic--movements could not be explained. I continued to watch her mysterious behavior from my second story window overlooking the two trees which seemed to be inspiring her demented darting. Did she have a nest nearby? Then I saw the source of the hummer's anxiety. A red

Hummingbird stayed to point out the danger to any newcomers and harry the snake. Between the two of us, it was convinced to move along. The liquid movement of the snake moving through the trees was incredible. Once before I'd seen coachwhips in a tree. Two had climbed a mesquite and were mating. Since the process can take several hours, it seemed a little precarious to have chosen a mesquite tree for the occasion, but their entwining dance was most

March; there were no previous May records for the county.

A White-tailed Kite, rare in spring, was observed near Maricopa Rd. and I-10 May 26 (RD). Individual N. Harriers were seen on the late date of May 10 at the Hassayampa River Preserve (NL) and at Arlington (DLu,EC); the species is rarely seen after mid-April. At least one of the pair of Red-shouldered Hawks at the HRP was seen there May 10 (DLu,EC).

A pair of Clapper Rails were heard calling at 115th Ave. and the Gila River May 10 (TC). Many pairs of Black-necked Stilts and Am. Avocets were found at a new nesting location May 10 at the newly constructed wetlands in the Lewis Prison complex off of Hwy. 85 (TC). An unusually large number of 213 Whimbrels were counted in Yuma fields Apr. 14 (HD). An **Hudsonian Godwit** was discovered at the Lower River Rd. pond n. of Palo Verde May 26 (PM,CD), providing only the second record for Maricopa County and the sixth for Arizona. A Baird's Sandpiper, rare in spring, was found at the new Gila Power Generating Plant in Gila Bend on the late date of May 10, providing the first May record for the county (TC). Twenty-five Red-necked Phalaropes (previously considered rare in spring) were counted on three ponds s.w. of Phoenix May 10 in the same area where the same number was counted a year ago (TC).

two dozen records for the state, only four of which have been in n. Arizona. The Bell's Vireo that wintered at BTA was still present there through March when the summer birds began arriving (CT). A Steller's Jay, observed at Camp Creek Mar. 22 (TC) was at a lower than usual elevation and may have remained from the fall. A flock of five to six Mexican Jays (irregular wanderers into the county) were seen above Slate Creek Divide Apr. 27 (CB) and May 10 (SG), about the same time of year as a small flock was seen there a year ago.

Four Western Bluebirds (rare summer residents) were observed on Mt. Ord May 10 (SG). The Rufous-backed Robin that wintered at BTA remained at least until Apr. 13 (*fide* CT). The Brown Thrasher that wintered at BTA was still present there Apr. 22 (CT).

The male N. Parula that wintered at the Cobble Ponds was last seen there Mar. 15 (EL); another male N. Parula was found at the Wickenburg Rest Stop Apr. 6 (MR). Grace's Warbler is rarely seen in the lowlands during migration, so unusual were individuals seen in a Scottsdale yard Apr. 18 (JBa) and along the Agua Fria River below

(Continued on Page 12)

coachwhip glided through the oleander branches, crossing effortlessly into the bottle brush tree, tree-climbing as silkily as fog flows inland from the sea. I went to the balcony for a closer look. Reddish above, lighter, almost white below--a good four feet of snake lay across branches only two feet below me. I could easily see black spotting on its flanks, near the head. Its color was pretty solid, no striping of any sort that ran the length of its body. It did, however, have brown cross-striping, barely noticeable against the brown-pink of its dorsal scaling. Its handsome head had the apparently smiling jaw line common to many snakes. Its tail was patterned beautifully. It seemed to be braided, thus the name coachwhip. reptilian eyes met mine and we both knew we'd been spotted.

After allowing me a good three minutes of observation time, the snake decided that between me and the hummingbird, its cover was blown; further stealth was ridiculous, so it may as well go practice its fine art of hunting elsewhere. It made a U-turn, slithered back into the oleander, down the trunk to the floor of the courtyard, then out the gate to open country. Now the hummingbird ceased her antics. She did not have a nest in the trees, at least not that I could find, but she did not want this invader perched in her tree. While the sparrows fled the hunting grounds, little Ms.

beautifully orchestrated in their leafy abode. They seemed as comfortable in the tree as any passerine. With a diet of eggs and birds, the coachwhip's ease in scaling trees is explained. While earthbound, it can also find food, as small rodents round out its meal plan. If startled, coachwhips escape down the holes of small rodents. Small rodents just can't win. Venomless, this graceful hunter is capable of lightning speed. Once caught, its prey is swallowed alive. Hunting is done by day. Unlike most other desert snakes, the coachwhip can tolerate higher, daytime temperatures, so it's diurnal in lifestyle, moderating its body temperature by moving between sunny and shady spots.

Coachwhips can attain eight feet in length, but most are around four to five, making the one in my tree a typical specimen. If caught, a coachwhip makes a terrible pet. It will never stop biting the hand that feeds it, or attempts to. It just refuses to be tamed. On the other side of the courtyard, a mourning dove incubates two eggs she's settled into a flimsy nest of crisscrossed sticks twelve feet high in another bottlebrush tree. My grandson and I are keeping an eye on her progress. We're marking the days until the eggs hatch. I'll bet she was sweating bullets watching the hummingbird pester the prowling coachwhip out of the courtyard.

Field Trips CUBA-GOING SOUTH

By Gary Markowski & Julie Craves

As we crept closer towards our destination, a small clearing on the edge of a lushly garnished footpath, Frank, our local birding guide, looked back at me and whispered "He's here – I hear him singing!" I turned and signaled to the rest of our group to move quickly and quietly ahead. Within seconds of our arrival on the perimeter of the clearing, we were all treated to extraordinary views of the world's smallest bird, the male Bee Hummingbird. The clean Caribbean sunlight electrified the red, green, and various iridescent blues that all somehow manage to adorn this shimmering little package. At approximately 2.5" in length, this little guy leaves a king sized impression.

Shortly afterwards, the slightly larger and more subtly bedecked female perched above. Gasps of delight and exuberant whispers could be heard, while irresistible urges to shout out loudly were squelched by a dozen bitten tongues. In birding terms, *the crowd went wild* at having seen these birds with such relative ease.

Without admitting as much, many of our Cuba Bird Study Program participants are motivated to come to Cuba in large part for the opportunity to see this bird, as well as a handful of compelling endemics. In the 8 years that we have offered these programs, we have had probably a 90 percent success ratio in seeing the fabled 'zunzuncito', as the bird is locally known. Whether they are lucky or not in this regard, birders in Cuba soon realize how much more, both in terms of birds and other fascinating features, is there to be experienced.

Shrouded in mystery and politically influenced misinformation, Cuba is an enigma. Scientifically speaking (despite being arguably the most bio-diverse nation in the region), from a U.S. perspective, Cuba is a biological black hole. Our largest and closest Caribbean neighbor is home to at least 21 bird species found no place else in the world. Some, like the Bee Hummingbird, are particularly special. The Zapata Rail, has never been photographed, and even among Cuba's top field ornithologists, has rarely been seen. The Zapata Sparrow is the only sparrow endemic to the West Indies. The Cuban Tody, and Cuban Trogon are simply gorgeous, and the ethereal, sweet song of the Cuban Solitaire is as unmistakable as it is unforgettable. Nine endemic species are endangered. In addition, a dozen or so endemic subspecies have the potential for full species status. This high level of endemism alone signifies Cuba as a globally important place for birds.

With Cuba representing 50% of the entire West Indian land mass, it is also one of the most important

revolution in 1959 that brought Fidel Castro into power marked the end of U.S.-Cuban relations. The embargo restricts both direct trade with Cuba and penalizes other countries that trade with the U.S. if they also trade with Cuba. Travel to Cuba by Americans is tightly controlled. With the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Cuba's main trading partner) in 1989, the Cuban economy went into a tailspin and citizens have since endured the "Special Period" of extreme austerity.

As a result, Cuban ornithologists struggle to work with few resources. Vehicles and fuel for transportation to field sites are limited. Basic essential field equipment is scarce. This includes guidebooks, binoculars, spotting scopes, mist nets and other bird banding gear, cameras, tape recorders, and even flashlights and batteries. Research is further handicapped by a shortage of computers, restricted Internet access, difficulty in obtaining the latest literature, and impaired communication with professional allies in other countries. Cuba has set aside many preserves, yet does not have the manpower or resources to adequately protect and study them.

Frank, our local guide in the Zapata region, is the Vice Director of Montemar National Park, in the Zapata Peninsula, Cuba's most important birding region (4520 sq. kilometers, home to more than 160 species of birds). Frank is a life-long resident of the area, and hands down is the best among a handful of very talented local bird guides. As talented as he is, Frank, like most Cuban ornithologists, is almost entirely dependent on foreign assistance for all that is necessary for him to do his job. By providing sorely needed resources (such as those mentioned above), and through building trusting relationships in the field, The Cuba Bird Study Program has created opportunities for cooperative research at basic levels and beyond. Scores of both professional and amateur birders from the U.S. have contributed greatly to this project since 1996. Our involvement over the years has helped raise the level of awareness both in Cuba and in the U.S. with respect to migrant, as well as endemic species.

Sadly, one conclusion that we have consistently heard repeated recently is that North American migrants are disappearing. What is happening to North American migrant birds wintering in Cuba? What habitats do they use? What are the population trends? How do they interact with resident birds? What is the status of Cuba's rare endemic species? These excellent and critical questions go largely unanswered.

IBA ANNOUNCEMENT

by Scott Wilbor

Program Announces New IBAs & Applauds IBA Science Teams in Action!

Scott Wilbor, Arizona Important Bird Areas Coordinator/Conservation Biologist, Tucson Audubon Society

Arizona's Important Bird Area (IBA) Scientific Review Committee of 14 biologists and ornithologists met April 18 at the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge* to review IBA nominations submitted last fall and winter. Five new IBAs were approved as "Identified" Arizona Important Bird Areas, they are:

1. Upper Little Colorado River Watershed
2. Marble Canyon (where the condors are making home!)
3. Chiricahua Mountains
4. Santa Rita Mountains
5. Sycamore Canyon (southern Arizona)

Particularly notable was the nomination and avian information compiled for the Upper Little Colorado Watershed IBA. The data gathered by White Mountain Audubon members Lorraine Wiesen and Jimmy Videle were outstanding and provided the first ever comprehensive avian catalog of bird species and their numbers for five major sections of this approximately 60 mile long IBA! They used sources like the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas, Forest Service surveys, Endangered Species surveys, Heritage Grant surveys, Bald Eagle surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, the North American Migration Count, and their own Audubon chapter and personal field surveys to put together their most comprehensive IBA nomination.

So what did they find? Highlights from their data summary include: 24 Bald Eagles, 6 Ospreys, 7 Northern Goshawks, 2 Peregrine Falcons, 10 Mexican Spotted Owls, 16 Red-naped Sapsuckers, 16 Southwestern Willow Flycatchers (!), 19 Cordilleran Flycatchers, 65 Pinyon Jays, 5 Gray Catbirds, 31 Virginia's Warblers, 14 MacGillivray's Warblers, 13 Red-faced Warblers, not to mention rare occurrences of Mountain Plovers, American Dippers, Veerys, Sage Thrashers, American Redstarts, and Pine Grosbeaks. Their research covered from 1976 to 2002, but primarily the 1990s to present (numbers are the maximum observed per season). They documented a total of 255 species, of which 134 are known to breed in the watershed! Wow, what a real gem of important avian habitat that up to now was never fully documented! Great job Lorraine and Jimmy! Now the hard news, there are planned developments (housing/recreational facilities) along the lower sections of this IBA, and thus far appeals by White Mountain Audubon to the State Land Trust and Apache County Planning and Zoning have not protected this important habitat (your voice for protecting this area is needed!). Contact: Lorraine Wiesen (928-337-2466) or Sue Sitko (928-368-6832).

Now for an update on our IBA Avian Science Initiative. IBA Science Teams are collecting avian inventory data for IBA site recognition and conservation planning. A Sonoran Audubon Society IBA Team partnering with the Bureau of Land Management at Agua Fria National Monument (north of Phoenix) is now conducting its second year of surveys. In the Verde Valley, Doug Van Gausig of Northern Arizona Audubon Society, leads survey efforts at the Tuzigoot IBA complex near Cottonwood. On Oak Creek, Roger Radd, of Northern Arizona Audubon, conducts surveys for the IBA Program at Page Springs Fish Hatchery IBA, as well as on private land along Oak Creek. Our Oak Creek surveys are part of our efforts to document bird species and numbers to identify a future larger Lower Oak Creek IBA, and gain coordinated protection and management from all who own or manage land along this stretch. At Tuzigoot and Oak Creek additional citizen-science volunteers are needed for water quality sampling and a nest box program respectively, as well as for additional bird surveys in this region.

The Tubac & upland Tumacacori Team, comprised of Tucson Audubon members Sally Johnson and Norma Miller, have surveys underway along 2.4 and 1.1 km routes in riparian and bosque habitats of the Santa Cruz River. Our Tumacacori Team of Sue Carnahan and Curtis Smith have begun surveys along a 4 km route in riparian habitat along the Santa Cruz River. Both these Santa Cruz teams are providing exceptional data that will be used for conservation planning for this critical stretch of the Santa

wintering and stopover sites for North American migrant birds. Well over 100 North American nesting species winter or pass through Cuba (see table). Nineteen species of passerines are considered common wintering residents. All but three of the eastern wood warblers have been recorded in Cuba, and Cuba was the only known wintering location for the extinct Bachman's Warbler.

We know so little because U.S. policy towards Cuba creates restrictions for American researchers and complications for funding organizations wishing to do work in Cuba. The

The conservation of Neotropical migrants – birds that breed in North America and winter in the tropics – has come into sharp focus in recent years. Long-term population declines have been detected in many species, but their complex annual cycle makes determining causes and cures very difficult. Clear understanding of the distribution, ecology, and status of these species is essential, yet there is a 44,000 square mile gap in our knowledge – a hole the size and shape of our largest Caribbean neighbor, Cuba.

Gary Markowski is the Director of the Cuba Bird Study Program, offering 10 day birding opportunities under US Treasury license to Cuba. Julie Craves is the Research Coordinator for the program, and is the founder of the Rouge River Bird Observatory at the University of Michigan – Dearborn. For more information about 2004 travel dates, contact Mr. Markowski at cubirds@aol.com, or 860 350-6752.

The following species primarily nest in North America and are considered common in Cuba winter (species that also have a nesting population in Cuba have been excluded). Many more species are less common winter residents. Status from "A Field Guide to the Birds of Cuba" by O. Garrido and A. Kirkconnell, 2000.

Northern Pintail	Yellow-throated Warbler
White-eyed Vireo	Northern Harrier
Semipalmated Sandpiper	Northern Parula
Worm-eating Warbler	Solitary Sandpiper
Blue-winged Teal	Prairie Warbler
Tree Swallow	Sora
Least Sandpiper	Magnolia Warbler
Northern Waterthrush	Spotted Sandpiper
Northern Shoveler	Palm Warbler
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	Black-bellied Plover
Short-billed Dowitcher	Cape May Warbler
Common Yellowthroat	Ruddy Turnstone
American Wigeon	Black-and-white Warbler
Gray Catbird	Semipalmated Plover
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	Black-throated Blue Warbler
Indigo Bunting	Sanderling
Ring-necked Duck	American Redstart
Cedar Waxwing	Greater Yellowlegs
Lesser Yellowlegs	Yellow-rumped Warbler

<http://www.aaas.org/communications/cuba.htm>

Cruz, and to recognize the Santa Cruz riparian corridor as an International Continentally Important Bird Area of both Mexico and the U.S

Yes, there is plenty of need for your participation! We need new IBA Teams to adopt and conduct bird and habitat surveys for the Salt-Gila River Ecosystem (west of Phoenix), the Gilbert Riparian Preserves, Sycamore/Slate & Tonto Creek areas (northeast of Phoenix), the Watson/Willow Lake IBA (Prescott), the Santa Cruz River, Cienega Creek, Sabino Creek, the Patagonia area, the Lower San Pedro, the White Mountains, and in Flagstaff. Although, the IBA Program is gathering this needed data statewide, we work hand in hand with the Conservation Chair or local IBA contact of each Audubon chapter to meet our common conservation goals!

Please give the Arizona IBA Program office at Tucson Audubon Society a call to set up your participation in an IBA Science Team (520-622-2230). Your help with our Avian Science Initiative will be used to put together great IBA nominations and data as was done for the Little Colorado River IBA. Most importantly, your participation will provide needed bird and habitat information that will help direct conservation efforts at these critical avian habitats! Finally, check our IBA web page now and especially in mid-August as we open up a third and final IBA nomination period for 2 ½ months (August to November). Look for a new, quick *AZ IBA Identification Nomination*, as an easy way to help us identify sites, or use the complete *AZ IBA Nomination*, to help us compile a final "first-cut" of sites for our AZ IBA catalog (www.tucsonaudubon.org/azibaprogram). We hope to complete Arizona's first Important Bird Areas publication and database in 2004! Use your birding skills (or other skills) to help us along the way!

* A special thank you to Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge staff. They manage an incredibly rich avian habitat, which will be reviewed for IBA status in the near future!