



# The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LVIII, No. 3

Fall 2008



Hermit Warbler

# Maricopa Audubon Meetings and Programs September–March 2008

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 2009 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 except December, which will be in Webster Auditorium (limited parking is accessed by taking the first right past the entrance off Galvin Parkway). 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 2008/2009

### September 2, 2008

Michelle Harrington The Verde River  
The Verde River is one of Arizona's last perennially flowing rivers and travels unobstructed for most of its course. It hosts numerous bird species, including the rare Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Desert-nesting Bald Eagle. This precious riparian corridor faces numerous threats from development, groundwater pumping and pipelines to serve growth in the Prescott area. This program focuses on the current status of threats and what can be done to protect the river.

### October 7, 2008

Peggy Turk-Boyer The Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans (CEDO)  
CEDO's coastal conservation coordinator, Alejandro Castillo López, joins Peggy Turk-Boyer for this program that explores the estuaries in the Upper Gulf of California. These areas offer critical nesting habitat for least tern and other wildlife that are threatened by development. CEDO works to protect natural resources and develop sustainable, non-threatening ways to use the ecosystems of the Upper Gulf of California and Sonoran Desert.

### November 2008

NO MEETING-ELECTION NIGHT!!!

### December 2, 2008

David and Diane Reesor Panama and Costa Rica at Webster Auditorium  
David has been interested in photography ever since he received his first Brownie Hawkeye camera for his 10th birthday. He and Diane have been fortunate to be able to travel to some truly wonderful places. The Reesors are well known for their incredible photographs and compelling

stories and are always very pleased to share their images with fellow enthusiasts. Join them in a trip to Panama and Costa Rica.

### January 6, 2009

Bob Brister Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness  
Please join the Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance (SUWA) for a breathtaking journey through the famous Redrock Country of Southern Utah. Presented by SUWA's Interregional Outreach Coordinator Bob Brister, Wild Utah: America's Redrock Wilderness is a multi-media slide show featuring stunning images by noted wilderness photographers and narrated by Robert Redford. Come enjoy, learn, and take action to preserve some of the most unique and awe inspiring landscapes in the world!

### February 3, 2009

Jim Burns Jim Burn's Arizona Birds  
Cactus Wren-dition writer/photographer Jim Burns will present images and stories from his book about Arizona's Special Bird Species which was published by the University of Arizona Press in March, 2008.

### March 3, 2009

Doug Alexander The Birds of New Zealand  
New Zealand is a country of beautiful vistas, unusual birds and other wildlife. Doug Alexander's program of a month long trip there in 2007 with wife Elaine focuses on New Zealand National Parks, wildlife and ecology. Bats are the only native mammals. The Maori Polynesians and Europeans introduced mammals and extensive farming that ravaged the island ecology. Doug is a nature photographer and a self taught naturalist. He began photographing nature at age 16, and has traveled to all the continents of the world. He has presented programs on Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica for the Maricopa Audubon Society.

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

## Committees/Support

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Maricopa Audubon Phone  
480-829-8209

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

## An Investment in the Future

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

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

## From the Editor, Deva Burns

Jim and I decided to go north for Memorial Day week this year and took off, by car, for Yellowstone. It is a long two days of driving but was kind of fun as it reminded us of so many vacations in the past with our two young sons.

Once there, we went from summer back into winter. Sunshine, rain, sleet, and snow showers every day. Yellowstone is such a magnificent place. It is hard to find words to describe both the scenery and the wildlife. I would heartily recommend a trip to this wonderland. Although Yellowstone is really about big mammals rather than birds, we think more birders should make this trip early in the season as we did—male Harlequin Ducks, nesting American Dipper, Bald Eagles of every age, Dusky Grouse, Cassin's Finches—many of the high country birds of the west. What's not to like. We enjoyed it so much we have signed up for a winter trip which should be really thrilling (and scary to this cold weather hating desert dweller).

However, as the article from Cornell Lab of

Ornithology shows, you do not have to travel to enjoy birds and nature. In fact, you can just sit on your fanny in a circle and bird! Check out Herb's article about The Big Sit! in October—from now on to be known as the Kathryn F. Anderson Granite Reef Asterisks' Big Sit!

If you want to keep up with The conservation concern of the moment, you can count on Bob Witzeman to keep you informed. Janet Witzeman reports on interesting bird sightings from March through May in her Field Observations. I want to thank the three Field Trip leaders that shared their trip information with the rest of us. Have you seen Montezuma's Quail? Check out Jim Burns's Arizona's Special Species article to help you try to find them. How did you do on the Warbler quiz?

The "summer doldrums" are over with the advent of the monsoons, and many of Arizona's special breeding species are raising broods now. It's time to get out there and start looking for them! Good birding to all of you.

Hermit Warbler on Ocotillo, photographed by Jim Burns below Madera Canyon AZ, May 2008, with Canon 1D body and Canon 600mm f4 lens.

At this moment, with gas prices at more than \$4.00 a gallon, and oil futures at around \$140 a barrel (Maybe by the time you actually read this you'll be saying: "Ah, he's talking about the good old days!") there are many who believe "damn environmentalists" is one word. U.S. offshore oil drilling and drilling in ANWR are hailed as the cure to our dependency on foreign oil. I just learned the other day that a sizeable portion of our oil imports come from Canada and Mexico, so there are a lot of different ways of defining "foreign".

It is said that only 8% of ANWR can ever by law be explored for oil, and all that is being asked right now is that drilling be allowed in as little as .07% of ANWR. One rightfully asks: "How could drilling in such a small segment of a place that no one ever goes to anyway have any significant impact on the seven figure acreage that is known as the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge? In contemplating my answer to this question, I came up

with the analogy of a 38 caliber bullet piercing a person's heart. It probably impacts directly .07% or less of that person's body's volume, but does anyone think that it wouldn't still kill the person?

What I do know is that we who are concerned about the destruction of habitat and our environment must take the lead in making less of a carbon footprint in our day-to-day lives. Let's all vow today to turn our thermostats up a little this summer and down a little next winter.

Let's use our evaporative coolers until the summer humidity makes it impossible to do so. Let's use cloth shopping bags. Let's try to buy higher mpg autos. Let's walk, bicycle, and use public transportation as much as we can. Let's use CFL bulbs, even though they're made in China, and dispose of them properly.

Let's carpool on all of our birding, butterfly, and dragonfly expeditions.

Remember that there are millions around the world who would give anything to have potable water coming out of the tap. If you think you'll die if you are compelled to drink anything but bottled water, at least recycle your plastic water bottles when you're finished with them.

But what about birds? If you want to see birds that you don't ordinarily see in the Valley, take the fairly short and scenic drive a few miles past Superior to the Oak Flat Campground, and bird there while you still can. In my several brief visits I've seen Juniper Titmouse, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Crissal's Thrasher to name just a few of the area's special bird species. And if you treasured the experience, join us in trying to save this precious natural site from the ravages of Resolution Copper's proposed copper mine that will result in taking this birding and camping locale out of the public domain.

## Bits & Pieces

Herb Fibel

Hopefully you have made note of these various news items elsewhere in the Cactus Wren-dition, but in case you haven't, here is a hodge-podge of things you need to know about:

There will be no Maricopa Audubon Society chapter meeting in November, since our regular meeting date falls on our National Election Day, and your board of directors was certain that you would much prefer to be working at the polls, helping out your chosen candidates or watching the results as they come in on your television set.

Our pre-meeting dinners are back—at the Rolling Hills 19th Tee Golf Course Restaurant at 1405 N. Mill Ave in Tempe. This is just south of the Zoo and Galvin Parkway on Mill, which becomes Van Buren. Advanced reservations are not necessary. The restaurant has been remodeled and is under new management. A variety of moderately priced light dinners are offered. This is a great way to meet and visit with your fellow Audubon members and often to meet our guest speaker. People start showing up about 5:30. Our meeting at the Desert Botanical Gardens is a five to ten minute drive from there.

Are you interested in birds, but don't know how to get started identifying them and how to go from just looking at them and enjoying them to becoming a birder? Maricopa Audubon is offering birding classes at three different locations this fall in conjunction with Tempe Parks and Recreation, the Gilbert Riparian Institute and the Desert Botanical Gardens:

**Basic Birding**—Herb Fibel, Instructor, Pyle Adult Center, Southern and Rural in Tempe. 7 consecutive Wednesday evenings from 7-8 p.m., October 1, 2008 to November 12, 2008, with three weekend one day field trips during the session. For further information call: (480) 350-5277 or register Online at <http://pkreconline.tempe.gov>.

**Beginning Birding at the Gilbert Riparian Institute**—Cynthia Donald, Instructor, Gilbert Riparian Institute, Greenfield and Guadalupe, Gilbert. 6 consecutive Monday evenings from 6:30-7:30 p.m., September 22, 2008 to October 27, 2008, with three or four weekend one day field trips during the session. For Internet registration go to [www.riparianinstitute.org](http://www.riparianinstitute.org)

**Beginning Birding at the Desert Botanical Gardens**—Cynthia Donald, Instructor, Desert Botanical Gardens, Galvin Parkway, Phoenix. 6 consecutive Tuesday evenings from 6:30-7:30 p.m., September 23, 2008 to October 29, 2008, with three or four weekend one day field trips during the session. For more information or to register call (480) 481-8146, or go to the web at [www.dbg.org](http://www.dbg.org).



# Notes & Announcements

Silent Auction - May 2007–  
Maricopa Audubon Society raised \$435 at the silent auction at our annual banquet last May. There were many fantastic items including artwork and books. We would like to thank the generous donors: Gloria and Don Traicoff, Herb Fibel, Suzanne Steadman, Kathe Anderson, Liz Hatcher, Mathew Becker, David Chorlton, Mark Horlings, Joy Hernbrode, Emerson Stiles, Doug Green, Janet Witzeman and Sylvia Orioli. Thank you all for supporting MAS programs and helping to make the auction interesting and fun.

Noftsgar Hill Inn Bed & Breakfast  
Feathers & Fluff weekend -  
September 20-21–Join Kathe Anderson for late afternoon birding at Besh-Ba-Gowah Archaeological Park and a 60 minute class Saturday evening, plus a complimentary Sunday morning field trip to the riparian areas of Roosevelt Lake and the Upper Salt River. Rosalie is offering a 2nd night discount for this event. Please contact her toll-free at 877-780-2479 or visit the website [www.noftsgarhillinn.com](http://www.noftsgarhillinn.com) for information and reservations.

Flagged Shorebirds–Although not common in our area, please be aware of color-flagged Hudsonian Godwits, Whimbrels, and any other shorebird species which you notice have color bands. For more information check out the article in this issue. You can also contact Dave Krueper, Ass't. Nongame Migratory Bird Coordinator, US Fish and Wildlife Service, PO Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103, (505) 248-6877 or [dave.krueper@fws.gov](mailto:dave.krueper@fws.gov)

Unwanted catalogues–Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalogue Choice works

collaboratively with the catalog industry to embrace voluntary measures to reduce unwanted mail by honoring your mail preferences. Catalog Choice has become a significant consumer voice in the direct mail industry. Nearly 200 catalog mailers are participating in Catalog Choice, and this number grows every day. Please go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org/pages/merchants> to reduce the mailing of unwanted catalogs.

Art Classes–Audubon Arizona and Scottsdale Artists' School are joining forces this fall to teach beginners how to record birds the way John James Audubon did – by drawing. Three weekend classes in sketching, watercolor, and scientific illustration are offered at \$150 each. For details, go to <http://www.ScottsdaleArtSchool.org> or <http://az.audubon.org> or call Scottsdale Artists' School at 480-990-1422.

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](mailto:jackfollett@msn.com). The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

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](mailto:wpetersen@massaudubon.org) or Paul Baicich at 410-992-9736 or [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net). They never sell the recipient list and you will receive a lot of interesting information.

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

# Notes & Announcements

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.casacabaloblanco.com](http://www.casacabaloblanco.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](http://www.azwildlife.com).

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

**Environmental Fund—Green At Work**—Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about

checking off “Green” choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include environmental/conservation groups, please contact Solange Whitehead at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: [efaz@efaz.org](mailto:efaz@efaz.org) or (480) 510-5511.

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

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

**Shade-grown coffee**—If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly

coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit [www.toucanetcoffee.com](http://www.toucanetcoffee.com) for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is [www.cafebritt.com](http://www.cafebritt.com). An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co—[www.thanksgivingcoffee.com](http://www.thanksgivingcoffee.com) or 800-648-6491.

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

# The Big Sit!

Herb Fibel

October is nigh, and it is time once again to talk about the Big Sit!

This event is really difficult to explain, but I'll try to rise to the challenge once again. The Big Sit! (and note that the word "Sit" is always followed by an exclamation point) is the brainchild of John Himmelman of the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club. John, a veteran (and inveterate) birder was smitten in 1993 with the idea that birding would be much easier if one could just sit and wait for the birds to come to him or to her.

John decided that the event, which he dubbed the "Big Sit!", should take place each year on a Sunday in mid-October. "Why October?" John asks himself, and he answers: "It's a nice time to be outdoors in Connecticut". (in Arizona, as well) "No bugs. No sunstroke." "And the possibility of some good migrants." Every team or individual chooses a spot to his or their liking and draws an imaginary 17 foot diameter circle, from within the confines of which birds seen or heard within a 24 hour period are tallied by the observer or observers. The dialogue between John and himself continues. "Why 17 feet?" "Two reasons: One: I stretched out a tape measure and decided that 17 feet is a comfortable enough area in which to corral a few good friends, their barbecue, a cooler and some lawn chairs. And Two: Years from now, if this event becomes an established tradition, (and indeed it has) one that spans the globe as well as my little state, I will receive a somewhat perverse pleasure in knowing that the

question: 'Why 17 feet?' will be puzzling great minds across the continent for time immemorial."

In its second year there were 8 circles, all in Connecticut. Today there are over 1,000 registered circle groups, and the event is worldwide.

Having read about this event, I decided thirteen years ago to set up my own Big Sit! circle. I found a perfect site that incorporated a riparian mesquite bosque, a mountain, and a large reservoir, at the Granite Reef Picnic Area just off the Bush Highway in the Tonto National Forest. I



then enlisted the help of Pete Moulton, Terry Brodner, my wife, Joyce, and Ken and Ardelle Howe. Ken and Joyce have since passed away, and Terry has established her own Big Sit! circle at Tres Rios in the west Valley. Pete and I continue as charter circle members. We have established many traditions of our own, including marking the actual perimeter of the circle with flour poured from an old sock, cribbageing and

crossword puzzling to occupy our idle time, and munching on baclava.

One year we arrived before dawn to a violent display of thunder and lightning. We decided to defer our Big Sit! to the following Sunday. I inquired as to whether our species count would be added to the Big Sit! official totals, and was told it would, but with an asterisk after each bird on our tally, to show that it was tallied on a day other than the official Big Sit! day. Ergo, we became the "Granite Reef Asterisks!" About five years ago we decided to make this event a fundraiser for MAS, particularly since we were no longer doing Birdathons. If you would like to make a per species tallied pledge, please let me know, and I'll bill you after the Big Sit!, or if you'd just like to make a donation, send your check marked Big Sit! donation to Mark Horlings, treasurer, whose address is on the back page of the Wren-dition. We average about 53 species each year. Last year we hit a record high of 67!

As a consequence of a generous donation from Kathe Anderson, honoring her late mother, we've expanded the name of our annual Big Sit! to the Kathryn F. Anderson Granite Reef Asterisks' Big Sit! We are already committed to having seven to nine observers this year in our tiny circle, but you can participate by making a donation or a pledge, or by setting up your own Big Sit! circle wherever you wish to do so, and registering it Online with Big Sit! sponsor, Bird Watcher's Digest, and pressing the link entitled "Big Sit!"

## Tribute to Kathryn F. Anderson 1915—2008

Kathe Anderson

Can you believe that my first recollection of watching birds inspires thoughts of unbelievable boredom? I was five years old. Mom took me out into the woods behind our house and sat me on a large fallen tree. She told me to sit still, watch and listen. Nothing happened—probably because sitting still was an alien concept at the time.

Perhaps Mom realized that was not the best approach; there were more subtle ways to inspire interest. The bird feeder attached to the bathroom window was endlessly intriguing. Unfortunately, only

one person at a time could enjoy the bird antics there. So there were other feeders outside the windows in the living room and kitchen.

Our yard attracted all the usual visitors to the Rhode Island suburbs—blue jays, white-breasted nuthatches, black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice, red-breasted and downy woodpeckers—and squirrels. But odd things showed up, as they often do in birding, if you are lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. I've never forgotten the bobbing, plodding walk of the only American woodcock I have ever seen, more than forty years

ago, as it made its way along the edge of the woods in full view of our windows.

Maybe it's habit, maybe it's genetic—Mom's brother was the second president of the Minnesota Audubon Society and contributor to the first Minnesota field guide. However I came by my current passion, Mom was at its center. She passed away in January, at the age of 92, having recently visited me in Arizona. And, yes, we went birding, although it is a less energetic pursuit than usual: I have finally learned to sit still.



# Montezuma Quail

Jim Burns

If you had a gun in my back and demanded I find you a Montezuma Quail today, I assure you I'd be dead at sundown. We all have a few nemesis birds, birds that always elude us, try as we might, no matter how much time, effort, and research we put into them. Montezuma Quail is that Arizona bird for all of us--beginner, experienced lister, and professional field guide alike. Of several Arizona special species it can be said that you don't find them, they find you. For no species is this truer than for this species, *Cyrtonyx montezumae*.

Most out-of-state birders, after their first couple visits, figure it out, and stop looking. For the lucky ones, a Montezuma will find them within the next couple trips. If you're bemoaning your ill luck, know that one friend missed on his first 14 trips to Arizona. Know also that I birded Arizona for 20 years before I got my first decent Montezuma photograph.

Then there was Vermonter Pat Pratt who saw his first Montezuma Quail one mile west of Montezuma Pass at the south end of the Huachucas. And George West who relocated from Alaska and soon had a Montezuma stroll down the nature trail behind the White House picnic area in Madera Canyon almost alongside him. And the evening I was camped out in Harshaw Canyon above Patagonia and had this grassland wraith's weird, other worldly call--a soft, ventriloquial, descending scream which sounds like nothing so much as an Eastern Screech-Owl, floating through the dusk all around me.

Other than plumage and numbers, our two special quail differ from one another in three major respects. Montezuma is not a bird of the low desert. It inhabits open pine/oak grasslands and oak canyons in the mountains up to 9000 feet. Unlike Gambel's, Montezuma reproduction is not contingent upon winter rains but upon the late summer monsoons--July through September. And, when danger is perceived, Montezumas do not run or fly. They freeze and sit tight. Many a birder knows this drill. You can't find a one to save your soul, then you almost step on one which flushes from beneath your feet and, if you're lucky, you don't soil your underwear.

Montezumas nest after the Arizona summer rains which cue their breeding impulse. The nest, usually in tall grass, is a grass-lined depression covered with a

grass dome which hangs down to hide a side entrance. This elaborate and well concealed structure is built by the female with help from the male. From eight to a dozen eggs are laid. Incubation, somewhat longer than for most quail at nearly a month, is primarily by the female. Like Gambel's, the young are precocial, led to food by both parents, but feed themselves.

The Montezuma diet is substantially different from that of the strictly vegetarian Gambel's. Montezumas have become more habitat specific than the other five members of the quail family in North America because of the relatively longer and more decurved claws on their front toes. Indeed, the genus name, *Cyrtonyx*, comes to us from the Greek words for "arched" and "talon." This evolutionary adaptation allows Montezumas to dig rather than simply



Photo by Jim Burns

scratch on the surface. Underground tubers and bulbs comprise a large portion of their diet, and in the process of unearthing these items they also find and consume many insects, particularly larvae and pupae. Acorns, berries, and fruits are also favored food items. Because Montezumas can dig for moist bulbs during dry months, they do not need free-standing water within their home range.

That home range, north of our border with Mexico, includes the mountain grasslands of southeast Arizona, extreme southwest New Mexico, and the Big Bend country of Texas. To the surprise of most out-of-state and many serious Arizona birders as well, Montezumas, a.k.a. Harlequin or Mearn's Quail, can also be found farther afield to the north, in the White Mountains of east central Arizona. They also occur in suitable habitat throughout the interior of Mexico.

The old common name, Harlequin Quail, came to us from the striking facial pattern of the male, thought to resemble the garish facial paint of the Harlequin,

a traditional clown character in Italian theater. Hunters know our Montezuma as Mearn's Quail, Edgar Mearns the late nineteenth century Army surgeon and field naturalist who first described this species to science.

Montezuma Quail are good to eat. I'm not a hunter, but I'm not anti-hunting. I came this close, though, to converting to anti-hunting one time, and it was all about Montezuma Quail. My wife and I had spent an entire weekend, eight hours a day for three days, combing the foothills up through Harshaw Canyon and the San Rafael grasslands above the town of Patagonia for Montezumas. To no avail.

Certainly no surprise given the elusive nature of this bird, but on our last morning, walking to our vehicle down an alley beside the Stage Stop Inn in Patagonia, we were brought to a stunned halt by feathers blowing up out of a trash barrel. Soft and delicate, barely longer than a finger digit, some with bold and perfect white dots on a dark brown ground, others with fine dark brown vermiculations on a rich, rufous ground, there was only one bird from which they could have come. We made the gut-wrenching mistake of going over to the barrel and peering in--gag reflexes, tears, imprecations--successful Mearn's hunters had cleaned their kill and left the remains right there before God and grieving birders.

The Mearn's/Montezuma harvest, rarely over 40,000 birds/year and often below 20,000, is nothing compared to the Gambel's because the Mearn's/Montezuma population is nothing compared to the Gambel's. Still, twenty to thirty something thousand is a big, big number to dedicated and frustrated birders. Remember that hunters go afield for quail with one large equipment advantage over birders--hunting dogs. Binoculars have no sense of smell.

Comb the hills and canyons around Patagonia, drive slowly along Ruby Road to Pena Blanca Lake and on into Sycamore Canyon, explore the Canelo Hills and the trails in lower Madera Canyon. If you're in the White Mountains and feeling really lucky, check the South Fork area of the Little Colorado west of Eagar or drive the forest service roads near Nutrioso.

Montezuma Quail do exist. If you're terminally ill or desperate, do something I did one time for photographs. Go out with a hunter. Most hunters enjoy nature for most of the same reasons you do. They know where to look, and their dogs know how to look.

# Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

## THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

Fall is migrant warbler time. Here are three western mountain warblers, which do not breed in Arizona, that you should be watching for in Valley riparian areas such as the Gilbert Riparian Area (GRA) or Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park (BTA), or in surrounding mountain venues such as Mt. Ord or the Pinals.



A. Good photo, difficult bird



B. Good photo, difficult bird



C. Good photo, easy bird

All photos by Jim Burns



# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

field trips

August-November 2008

**CAR POOLING:** 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 10 cents per mile. Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

**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 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. Trips are level 1 unless noted otherwise.

## **REMINDERS:**

- Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water.
- Avoid wearing bright colors.
- Always bring your binoculars. Bring a scope if recommended.
- Submit trip and leader suggestions to the field trip chair.
- Unless stated otherwise, reservations are required.
- Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

\*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.

Impromptu Field Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others

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

## **Saturday, August 16, Sunday, August 17 (optional)**

Mt. Graham: We have not visited this highest point in southeastern Arizona, in the Pinaleno Mountains and Coronado National Forest, for many years. This is the site of the telescope building controversy during the past two decades, fought in large part by one of our leaders and conservation chairman, Bob Witzeman. As we climb up the mountain, we will visit the various campgrounds, picnic areas, creeks and grassy areas to include Snow Flat and Treasure Park, and Riggs Lake at the top. Bird species we will look for include Band-tailed Pigeon, Northern Goshawk, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Mexican Jay, Grace's Warbler, and Yellow-eyed Junco. We will also look for the endangered Mt. Graham Red Squirrel. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the entrance sign to Roper Lake State Park on Route 191 just south of Safford. Meet 7:00AM Sunday at Hospital Flat for optional second day of birding. Lodging also available in Safford.

Co-Leaders: Richard Kaiser  
602-276-3312 or [rkaiserinaz@aol.com](mailto:rkaiserinaz@aol.com)  
for reservations and Bob Witzeman

## **Saturday, August 23**

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) assists in the control of insect pests and in turn are a food source for birds. They breed in water but can be found far from it. GWR has proved to be a very productive odonata habitat. Their remarkable morphology, brilliant colorations and curious behaviors inspire and amaze observers of these fascinating aerialists. Look for Flame Skimmer, Red-tailed Pennant, Red Saddlebags, Familiar Bluet, Mexican Amberwing and Blue Dasher. The GWR is SE of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada, south of the east side of the parking lot. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Bob Witzeman  
602.840.0052

## **Saturday, August 23**

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch. Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson.  
480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

## **Sunday, August 24**

Oracle Ridge and Oracle State Park: Life on the Ecotome. Explore the boundary between two ecological zones, the high desert and oak woodland, in the 4,500' Catalina Mountains. Two distinct plant communities overlap in this under birded area. The plant community on Oracle Ridge is typical SE Arizona

continued on page 10

# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

continued from page 9

Madrean Evergreen Woodland, with Az. White Oak, Emory Oak, Alligator Juniper, Mountain Mahogany, Manzanita, Lemonade Berry, Beargrass, and Desert Spoon dominating the landscape. The other plant community, the Semi-Desert Grassland or simply High Desert, dominates the lower parts of the town of Oracle. Typical plants for this part of town are Velvet Mesquite, Catclaw Acacia, Soap tree Yucca, and Prickly Pear Cactus. As in many parts of Arizona, this former grassland has been radically altered by overgrazing. A tour of historic Kannally Ranch and walled gardens will be an added treat. Bring water, lunch, snacks, scope optional. Meet 8:00AM at the Circle K, 2000 W. American Ave. From HWY 77 west of Oracle, go east on W. American Ave. Circle K is on the left across from Casa Rivera Restaurant. Possible fee into Oracle State Park. Limit 12. Difficulty 2.

Leader: Chuck Lefevre  
Scott Burge 480. 968.5141, [burge@burgenv.com](mailto:burge@burgenv.com) for reservations

## Saturday, September 6

Page Springs. We will visit the Page Springs fish hatchery and bird other nearby locations. Possible sightings of Yellow-billed cuckoo, Wood duck, Western and Cassin's Kingbird, summer warblers and possibly the Republican nominee for president at his summer home. Spotting scopes are helpful. Bring lunch. We will meet near Cornville at 8:00AM and break up in the early afternoon. Limit 15. Difficulty 2.

Leader: Herb Fibel for information and reservations, 480.966.5246, [herbertsfibel@aol.com](mailto:herbertsfibel@aol.com)

## Wednesday, September 10

Beginning Dragonflies at the Phoenix Zoo. Join MAS Conservation Chair Bob Witzeman on a leisurely walk through the Phoenix Zoo to look for dragonflies and damselflies. Meet 8:00 AM on the bridge before the entrance. Reservations not required.

Leader: Bob Witzeman

## Saturday, September 13

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 315 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 loop trail to look for fall migrants and residents including Gray Hawk, Common Black Hawk, tanagers, warblers and grassland species. 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 hike (about 5 miles).

Leader: Park Ranger Bill Adler  
Scott Burge 480. 968.5141, [burge@burgenv.com](mailto:burge@burgenv.com) for reservations

## Sunday, September 14

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch. Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson.  
480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

## Saturday, September 27

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) assists in the control of insect pests and in turn are a food source for birds. They breed in water but can be found far from it. GWR has proved to be a very productive odonata habitat. Their remarkable morphology, brilliant colorations and curious behaviors inspire and amaze observers of these fascinating aerialists. Look for Flame Skimmer, Red-tailed Pennant, Red Saddlebags, Familiar Bluet, Mexican Amberwing and Blue Dasher. The GWR is SE of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada, south of the east side of the parking lot. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring

binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Laurie Nessel  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

## Wednesday, October 1st

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Birds and Butterflies. 60 miles east of the valley, this desert oasis always produces a good variety of species and occasionally a genuine surprise. We will look for early winter arrivals, summer stragglers and residents including woodpeckers and cardinals. \$7.50 entrance fee per person. Meet 8:00AM at BTA. Done by noon. Lunch optional. Limit 12.

Leader: Marceline VanDewater  
Scott Burge 480. 968.5141, [burge@burgenv.com](mailto:burge@burgenv.com) for reservations and carpooling

## Saturday, October 18

Gila Bend and Painted Rock Dam. Large numbers of White Pelicans, Black Terns, casual gulls and other migratory waterfowl and shorebirds as well as dragonflies are possibilities. Limit 10. Difficulty 2, level but long walk. Time permitting, we will visit sewage ponds on Watermelon Road and power plant. Bring scope. Meet 8:00AM at Space Age Restaurant in Gila Bend.

Leader: Bob Witzeman  
602.840.0052, [witzeman@cox.net](mailto:witzeman@cox.net) for reservations and carpooling

## Saturdays, October 25

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) assists in the control of insect pests and in turn are a food source for birds. They breed in water but can be found far from it. GWR has proved to be a very productive odonata habitat. Their remarkable morphology, brilliant colorations and curious behaviors inspire and amaze observers of these fascinating aerialists. Look for Flame Skimmer, Red-tailed Pennant, Red Saddlebags, Familiar

# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Bluet, Mexican Amberwing and Blue Dasher. The GWR is SE of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Meet 8:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada, south of the east side of the parking lot. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1.

Leaders: Bob Witzeman  
602.840.0052

## Monday, October 27

Workman Creek, Sierra Ancha Experimental Station and Parker Creek. This trip with 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).

Leader: Gene Sturla from Arizona Game and Fish Department  
Laurie Nessel [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com) or 480.968.5614 for reservations and carpooling

## Saturday, November 1

Lower Salt River\*. Granite Reef, Phon D Sutton, Coon Bluff and time permitting Goldfield. Bald Eagle, Vermillion Flycatcher, Western Bluebirds and other migrating passerines and waterfowl are possibilities. Lawrence Goldfinches were seen in previous trips. Difficulty 2. Limit 12. Forest Service Pass required in advance. Carpooling recommended. Done by 3:00PM. Bring lunch.

Leader: Herb Fibel for information and reservations, 480.966.5246, [herbertsfibel@aol.com](mailto:herbertsfibel@aol.com)

## Monday, Nov. 3

Fossil Creek. Join AGFD biologist on a tour of this Verde River tributary whose travertine lined waters were recently restored to their natural

channel after over nearly 100 years of diversion. Focus will be on the plant community starting with the chaparral plants on the upper slopes. Prepare for water crossings and moderate to difficult hiking of about 3 miles. Bring water, hats, binos, baggies for seed collection, suitable footwear. Limit 20. Return to Phoenix late afternoon.

Leader: Gene Sturla  
Laurie Nessel [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com) or 480.968.5614 for reservations and carpooling.

## Wednesday, November 5

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. Especially good for beginners to learn the difference between male and females ducks. Maybe some other zoo surprises as well. No limit. Done by 10:00. Difficulty 1

Leader: Mike Foley 602 914 -4339, [mfoley33@gmail.com](mailto:mfoley33@gmail.com) for reservations

## Saturday, November 8

Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Located about 60 miles east of the Phoenix metropolitan area, near the town of Superior, this desert oasis and state park always attracts a good variety of bird species and occasionally an interesting rarity. The large quantity of desert plants and trees on numerous trails, as well as a geological garden and a reservoir called Ayer Lake, contribute to the quantity of bird and animal life found here. Bird species we could see include Rock Wren, Green-tailed Towhee, American Robin, Green Heron, and Red-naped Sapsucker. We will assemble at 8:00 A.M. in the parking lot of the Arboretum. An optional carpool meeting place and time may be arranged. There is a \$7.50 state park entry fee. Bring a lunch. Limit: 20, Difficulty: 1

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

## Saturday, November 23

Lost Dutchman State Park. This desert park lies at the base of Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. This is a beautiful hike but steep in places. Resident species include Canyon Towhee, Rock and Canyon Wrens. Bring water, lunch. Scope optional. \$5 per car entry fee. Difficulty 3, 3 mile hike, steep in places. Limit 12

Leader: Laurie Nessel  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com) or 480.968.5614 for reservations and carpooling.

## Continuing

Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens. Mondays; Aug-Sept. 7:00A, Oct-May 8:00A. Second Saturdays Oct-May 8:00A. 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 walking shoes, and bring binoculars if available. Free with admission to the garden.

Bird Walks at Sonoita Creek State Natural Area located within Patagonia Lake State Park. Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, October- April 15th. 5 mile bird hikes along both upland and riparian habitats. Patagonia Lake Road, 7 miles west of Patagonia. \$7 entry fee per vehicle. <http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sonoitacreeksna.html> for current schedule. For information/reservations (required) call (520) 287-2791

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



# Oak Flat Still Under Attack

Bob Witzeman

"Until he extends the circle of his compassion to all living things, man will not himself find peace."

Albert Schweitzer 1875-1965

On July 8, 2008 hearings were scheduled in the U.S. Senate on the Resolution Copper Company (RCC) proposed land swap. It would give to RCC 3025 acres of U.S. Forest Service land surrounding the Oak Flat campground near Superior, Arizona. This proposed "block-cave" underground mine would result in collapse of the area similar to an open pit mine, destroying a renowned birdwatching and rock-climbing area, habitat of an endangered cactus species, and Native American cultural, religious, and historical sites.

Oak Flat and nearby Boyce Thompson Arboretum have been a highlight for nature study and field trips for years. Oak Flat is also part of the Superior, AZ, Christmas Count -- led by MAS members over the past decade. Oak Flat provides valuable nesting or wintering habitat for many National Audubon Society/American Bird Conservancy "watchlisted" species including Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow, Lucy's Warbler, Harri's Sparrow,



The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)-exempt Resolution Copper mine threatens to dewater the Devil's Canyon's 7-15 mile "ribbon-of-life" riparian treasure of Fremont Cottonwood, Gooddings Willow, Arizona Black Walnut, Arizona Ash, Arizona White Oak, Arizona Alder, Arizona Sycamore, Coyote Willow, and Arizona Cypress, studded with Black and Zone-tailed Hawk nests. The mine would also weaken Endangered species and Native American (NHPA) cultural protection laws. Fall photo: Charles Babbitt.

and Lewis's Woodpecker. Noteworthy non-breeding species at this central Arizona birding hotspot have included: Rufous-backed Robin, Lawrence's Goldfinch, and Varied Thrush (the latter two watch-listed). MAS member, and renowned bird photographer and author, Jim Burns, has pointed out that Oak Flat is an excellent place for encountering that elusive skulker, the Crissal Thrasher.

A stunning array of Zone-tailed and Black Hawks as well as other Sonoran Desert birds, butterflies, dragonflies, reptiles and plantlife are found there.

All of the congressional versions of this legislation presented to date would exempt

this project from the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Passed by Congress in 1969, NEPA is our nation's most important environmental law. NEPA affords public oversight and transparency by means of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. It guarantees public hearings, written and oral public input, and full federal agency response.

Since there are endangered species (Arizona Hedgehog Cactus) and Native American historic and sacred sites involved, RCC's drastic exemption from NEPA greatly weakens Endangered Species Act (ESA) and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) protections to the area's endangered species, historical, and cultural treasures. NEPA oversight of clean air, water, riparian streamflow, aquifer protections, and Native American cultural and historic sites (Apache Leap) would be thrown out the window.

At Apache Leap, some seventy Apache in the 19th century were ambushed by U.S. Cavalry. Rather than accept capture they leapt off that abutment. To Native Americans this is as important a historic battlefield treasure as Antietam or Gettysburg would be to U.S. citizens. Yet Congress would never allow those battlefields to be obliterated by a mining operation, let alone by a foreign mining company.

Republican presidents Eisenhower, and Nixon two decades later, declared by Executive Order that Oak Flat be permanently closed to mining. That RCC has the clout (read money) to shove under the rug (1) two Executive Orders, (2) U.S. environmental and cultural protection laws including NEPA, ESA and NHPA and (3) bring on board the entire Arizona Congressional Delegation (with the worthy exceptions of Representatives Grijalva and Giffords) is testimony to the clout and cash of today's multinational mining industry. RCC is made up of arguably the two largest mining companies in the world, Rio Tinto of England and BHPbilliton of Australia.

The two highest paid executives in Arizona in 2008 (Arizona Republic, June 29, 2008) were Richard Anderson (\$41 million) and James Moffett (\$44 million). Both are copper company executives.

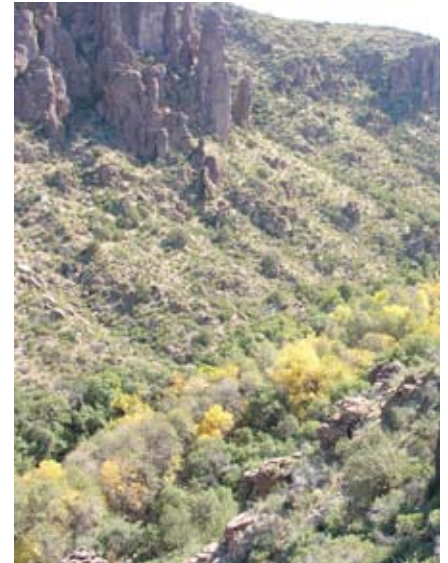
The new RCC President, David Salisbury, in recent discussions

with your MAS Conservation Chair and chapter President Herb Fibel, remarked that his company has good relations with a number of Audubon entities across the U.S.

For example Audubon Arizona, the National Audubon Society (NAS) office in Arizona, published in their newsletter receipt of the following contributions from RCC: in early 2006 "between \$25,000 and \$49,999," in mid 2006-2007 "between \$10,000 and \$24,999," later in 2006-07 "between \$25,000 and \$49,999," and in 2006-07 "between \$10,000 and \$24,999." NAS also finds itself a beneficiary of RCC's NEPA-exempt Oak Flat

land swap as recipient of circa \$7,500,000 from RCC for some 1000 acres of land to directly benefit NAS's Appleton-Whittel Ranch in Elgin, AZ. Audubon Arizona has been frequently quoted in Arizona's newspapers and editorials as endorsing this Oak Flat (NEPA-exempt) land swap!

RCC has refused to reveal where in Arizona or elsewhere they will smelt their ore and what air pollution protections they will use. They have not disclosed how much scarce Colorado River CAP water (and Arizona groundwater)



Devil's Canyon: Under siege by the proposed Resolution Copper mine, is this riparian masterpiece of springs, wetlands, limpid pools and breathtaking waterfalls. Over 90% of Arizona's riparian wetlands, critical to the survival of Sonoran Desert birds and wildlife, have been destroyed by dams, stream diversions, mining, groundwater pumping, and grazing. Winter photo: Lisa Fitzner

they will divert, extract and consume annually. However, they have already purchased and stored away (underground) huge amounts of CAP water. This indicates they may use as much (or more) water annually as the City of Tempe. Being exempt from NEPA, RCC refuses to reveal how they will dispose of their polluting mining wastes and overburden. Likewise they have kept secret what will befall the water table and adjacent streams (like Devil's Canyon) surrounding the area from their massive groundwater pumping and mineshaft dewatering of their 7000 ft. deep mine. Such devastating impacts would normally be publicly reviewed in an EIS under NEPA.

Now RCC is claiming that under newly proposed draft legislation RCC may, perhaps do NEPA -- well, sort of NEPA! However, once they have been given title to the USFS land by Congress, RCC can thumb their nose at fulfilling the requirements of those "pesky" USFS/NEPA Impact Statements. Nor would RCC have to post bonds for clean-up upon mine closure or pay any royalties to Uncle Sam like U.S. coal, oil and gas industries.

## MARCH, APRIL, & MAY 2008

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m. ob.), Morgan City Wash (MCW), North American Migration Count (NAMC), Painted Rock Dam (PRD).

A pair of Greater White-fronted Geese was reported at GWR 3 Mar (MSc) and the two that were found at Fountain Hills in late Dec remained until 5 Mar (JSm). The Snow Goose that wintered at the golf course in Casa Grande, remained until 27 Mar (m. ob.) and three were observed s. of Gillespie Dam 3 Mar (DPo). A Ross's Goose was found at ASU Research Park 17 Mar and remained through the period (RDu,DL). A male Wood Duck (rare after mid-Apr) was seen at Tres Rios 17 May (MHe). A male Eurasian Teal (a subspecies of Green-winged Teal, rarely seen in the U.S.) was discovered at GWR 2 Mar (PD); there has been at least one prior state record. A Lesser Scaup (uncommon after the end of April) was reported at the Watermelon Rd. ponds, Gila Bend 7 May (PL). A female Lesser Scaup was observed at Kearny Lake on the very late date of 28 May ((TC).

A male Surf Scoter was found at Gila Bend Power Plant ponds 10 May (BGro) where it remained at least until 25 May (CBab,SSSt) and provided the first May record for Maricopa Co. The female White-winged Scoter that wintered at Saguaro Lake, was discovered there again 25 May (MMo), providing the second spring record for Maricopa Co. and the sixth for the state. A Common Goldeneye, observed at PRD 10 May (BGro), provided the first May

record for Maricopa Co. A Bufflehead was reported at the Watermelon Rd. ponds on the late date of 7 May (PL).

Three Wild Turkeys were discovered on Mt. Ord 10 May (DPo,KR,CR); the species is a rare resident of the high mountains in Maricopa Co. A Pacific Loon was discovered on Saguaro Lake 30 Mar (KRo); the species is a casual winter visitor and transient; this was the first March record for Mar. Co. A Yellow-billed Loon, found on Tempe Town Lake 20 – 24 May (DB et al.), represented only the second record for Maricopa Co. A Neotropic Cormorant was seen in a new area – near Butcher Jones Beach, Saguaro Lake 28 Mar (LHat,RWd). Courtship activity with sticks was seen taking place among Neotropic Cormorants at GWR 7 Apr (MMo).

Individual White-tailed Kites were reported s. of Gillespie Dam 8 Mar (MK), near Buckeye 30 Apr (TC), and on Arlington School Rd., 24 May (MHe). A Sharp-shinned Hawk (uncommon after the end of March) was seen at GWR on the late date of 18 Apr (MMo). A pair of Gray Hawks was discovered nesting at HRP 19 May (TC); during six springs and summers since 1993, one or two of these casual visitors have been reported at HRP; there was only one previous nesting record for Maricopa Co. The pair of Red-shouldered Hawks at HRP continued to be seen through the period (LHar,TC). A Rough-legged Hawk, a rare winter visitor, was observed flying over central Scottsdale 3 Mar (AMcG). Individual Golden Eagles (rare residents) were reported near Camp Creek 5 Apr (MV,BIs) and e. of Goldfield Ranch 10 May (CF).

Five Clapper Rails were detected in Arlington Valley 30 Apr (TC). Soras usually depart by early May, so of interest were the three that were reported on the NAMC 10 May (fide TC) and one at GWR 3 – 17 May (MMo). A large number of 100 Sandhill Cranes (irregular, rare winter visitors) were reported s. of Gillespie Dam 7 Mar (DPo); of interest is that the same number was counted in the same area on the same date a year ago.

Three Snowy Plovers were found 4 Apr in the section of Paloma Ranch where the species nested a year ago and by 25 Apr there were 10 adults, including displaying males, and five half grown chicks; it was thought that nesting began in March; numbers continued to be present there 10 May (BGro). Individual late-staying Semipalmated Plovers were seen at GWR 17 May (MMo,NG) and at the sludge ponds e. of El Mirage 23 May (CBab). The N. Jacana that wintered at the golf course in Casa Grande, was last seen there 13 Apr (m. ob.). Individual Solitary Sandpipers were reported at PRD 12 Apr (CBab,DPe), at the sludge ponds at the corner of Broadway and Avondale 15 Apr (RHa), and at GWR 29 Apr (RDi,MMo).

Two Whimbrels, casual transients, were observed at Paloma 25 Apr and one was found at the Lower River Rd. ponds, Palo Verde 10 May (BGro). Individual Marbled Godwits were seen at Paloma 25 Apr and at the sludge ponds e. of El Mirage on the late date of 23 May (CBab). Two Baird's Sandpipers, rare in spring, were found at the sludge pond near Baseline and Palo Verde Rd. 30 Apr (TC). A large group of

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# Field Observations

continued from page 13

21 Stilt Sandpipers, observed and photographed at GWR 17 May (MMo), was especially unusual because the species is considered to be rare in spring and there was only one prior May record for Maricopa Co. Red-necked Phalaropes, rare in spring, were reported in May. A group of 11 were noted below PRD 10 May during the NAMC (BGro) and individuals were seen at Veterans Oasis Park, Chandler 25 May (SFJMa) and at the Gila Bend Power Plant pond 25 May (CBab,SSt).

Between one and two Franklin's Gulls were reported at GWR during April (MMo,RDi,HBon), one was seen at MCW 17 Apr (TC), and two were observed on the NAMC 10 May (fide TC). California Gulls are rare transients after mid-May, so four counted at GWR 23 May (MMo) was noteworthy. A Least Tern was discovered at GWR 5 May (JKo) and remained at least until 22 May (MMo, BHi); the species has been recorded at GWR during May in each of the last three years. Another Least Tern was found at Gillespie Dam 16 May (PL). Individual Black Terns, rare in spring, were observed at Palo Verde 30 Apr (TC) and at GWR 23 May (DPe).

Although Eurasian Collared-Dove populations have rapidly increased in most small towns and rural communities throughout Maricopa Co. since their arrival in 2001, they have largely shunned the dense residential and highly urban area in the greater Phoenix area. That is until March and April, when individuals and pairs appeared and set up territories at many scattered residential neighborhoods in Phoenix, Scottsdale, and other cities (fide TC). A Ruddy Ground-Dove was found 21 Mar along Southern between

99th and 107th Ave., in the same area where one was seen carrying nest material in years past (BGro). A Whip-poor-will, an accidental migrant in the lowlands, was discovered at PRD 10 May (BGro).

An adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird, a rare visitor to Maricopa Co., was observed 13 Mar at HRP (CM) and remained at least until 10 May (TC). A Broad-tailed Hummingbird, a rare transient at lower elevations, was seen in a n.e. Phoenix yard 25 Mar (LHat). A male Rufous Hummingbird, an uncommon spring migrant, was reported near South Mountain 25 Mar (RFo).

The Lewis's Woodpecker that wintered in Peoria, remained until 4 Mar (BIn). Two Lewis's Woodpeckers were found at Sunflower 28 Mar (RWd,LHat) and one was reported at Seven Springs 13 May (GL). Individual Acorn Woodpeckers, rare transients in the lowlands, especially in spring, were observed at HRP 10 May (TC) and at Tres Rios 10 May (MHe).

Twelve Olive-sided Flycatchers, uncommon transients, were reported from six areas around Phoenix from 9 May to 24 May (m. ob.). A Greater Pewee, an uncommon transient, was observed at Oak Flat 4 May (PMo). Eight Willow Flycatchers, uncommon transients, were found in five areas around Phoenix in May (m. ob.). A Dusky Flycatcher was observed at HRP on the early date of 1 Mar (LHar); another individual was reported at Paloma Ranch on the late date of 25 May (CBab,SSt). A Gray Flycatcher was observed singing at the top of a juniper in appropriate breeding habitat along Sycamore Creek 6 Apr (PD). An exceptionally high number of 20 – 25 migrating

Gray Flycatchers were observed n. of Carefree 19 Apr (TC).

A pair of Vermilion Flycatchers that were probably nesting, were seen along the lower Gila River s.e. of Buckeye 30 Apr; the species is a sparse nester along the lower Gila River (TC). Tropical Kingbirds (one 10 May (TC) and two 16 May (MHe) returned to HRP where they have been nesting since spring 2001. A Thick-billed Kingbird was found at HRP 10 May – back for the sixth consecutive year (TC).

A Bell's Vireo was reported at Rio Salado on the early date of 1 Mar. (TGa). A Gray Vireo, unusual in the lowlands, was found in a Scottsdale yard 19 Apr (JBar). Numbers of Western Scrub-Jays increased at Whitlow Dam to six 10 Apr and one was still present there May 10 (JBar). An Am. Crow, a rare transient, was discovered at Mesquite Wash 10 May (DPo) and provided the first May record for Maricopa Co. Com. Ravens were found nesting at GWR 7 Apr, evidence of the species increasing presence in urban areas (MMo).

A Purple Martin, a rare transient, was photographed at GWR 23 May (BGri), one was observed at MCW 24 May (TC), and three were seen at Arlington Wildlife Area 24 May (MHe). Several pairs of Barn Swallows were found nesting under low roadway culverts near Aguila during the NAMC 10 May (TC).

Two Brown Creepers remained at HRP until 21 Mar (MHe) and the Brown Creeper that wintered at Eldorado Park, was last seen there 2 Apr (JBar). Three Swainson's Thrushes, uncommon transients, were recorded during the NAMC 10



# Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

field observations  
Janet Witzeman

May (fide TC), one found at GWR 13 & 23 May represented the 200th species recorded at GWR (MMo,PD), and one was observed at Spur Cross 31 May (BIs).

A Virginia's Warbler, an uncommon transient in the lowlands, not usually recorded after early May, was observed at Seven Springs Wash on the late date of 16 May (TC). The N. Parula that wintered at GWR, remained at least until 8 Mar (RDi,MMo); another individual was found at Rio Salado 3 May (KR et al.). A Yellow-rumped Warbler was still lingering at Granite Reef 25 May (MMo). A Grace's Warbler, rarely seen in the lowlands, was found at BTA 10 May (J&BW), providing the first record for BTA.

A female Prothonotary Warbler was discovered at GWR (BGri), providing the eighth record for Maricopa Co. and the first in spring. A Mourning Warbler was discovered in a yard in n.e. Phoenix 14 May (TC), providing only the third record for Maricopa Co. and the first in spring. MacGillivray's Warbler is rarely recorded after mid-May, so of interest were the number that were found in late May: three at GWR 22 May (MMo,BHi), at least three along the Reach 11 Canal 23 May (KR), four at MCW 24 May (TC), one still at GWR 24 May (PD), and one still at MCW 31 May (TC).

A female Hepatic Tanager, a casual migrant in the lowlands, was observed at Seven Springs Wash 16 May (TC). A female Summer Tanager was reported at HRP on the early date of 1 Mar (LHar) and a male was seen there 21 Mar (MHe); the species is not usually recorded before mid-April.

Two Green-tailed Towhees were observed at MCW on the late date of 24 May (TC). A Clay-colored Sparrow, a rare migrant, was discovered near the e. side of the Agua Fria River, n.e. of Southern Ave. 6 May (TC). The "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow that wintered in a Scottsdale yard, was seen there again 14 – 18 Mar (JBar) and one was found at ponds in the Agua Fria River Bed near Avondale 4 Apr (TC); the species is seldom recorded after the end of March.

A Golden-crowned Sparrow was observed at Rio Salado 15 Mar (TGa) and the one found at Seven Springs in January, was still present there 19 Apr (DF,WT). A "Gray-headed" Dark-eyed Junco was seen in a Scottsdale yard on the slightly late date of 1 May (DG). Five Chestnut-collared Longspurs were observed near Southern and 99th Ave. on the late date of 8 Mar (TGa et al.).

The Pyrrhuloxia that wintered at GWR, remained at least until 5 Mar (RDi). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was discovered in Hidden Valley, n.w. Pinal Co. 14 May (JKe) in the same area where one was reported a year ago in April. A Lazuli Bunting, observed at Rio Salado 16 Apr (TGa), was a month earlier than usual. Individual Indigo Buntings, rare transients, were found along the Gila River near 99th Ave. 14 May (TC), at Reach 11 Recreation Site 23 May (KR), at GWR 23 May (PD), and at MCW 24 May (TC). The Painted Bunting that wintered at Rio Salado, remained at least until 16 Apr (PD).

Cassin's Finches continued to be seen in greater numbers than usual; flocks were reported at Sunflower during March at least until 6 Apr

(KR,RWd,LHat,PD). A female Cassin's Finch, observed near the confluence of the Hassayampa and Gila River 30 Apr, was in an unusual habitat and elevation, especially so late in spring (TC). Individual Red Crossbills were seen flying over a n.e. Phoenix yard 12 Mar (TC) and in a Scottsdale yard 15 Apr (JBar); eight were reported at BTA 15 Mar (ErH).

Individual Pine Siskins, irregular visitors, were observed on Mt. Ord 28 Apr (RWd,LHat) and in a south Phoenix yard 13 May (LS). Individual Lawrence's Goldfinches were seen at MCW 21 Mar (TC), at BTA 18 Apr (RDi), and at HRP on the late date of 10 May which suggested possible nesting (TC). The number of Am. Goldfinches at Tres Rios increased from one 21 Apr (MHe, RHa) to seven 6 May (TC); one was reported at GWR 2 May (MMo).

Observers: Charles Babbitt, Dan Barrett, Jack Bartley, Harold Bond, Troy Corman, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Robert Dummer, Dave Ferreira, Craig Fischer, Randy Forrest, Scott Frye, Noah Gaines, Tom Gaskill, Doug Green, Brendon Grice, Bill Grossi, Ron Haaseth Lauren Harter, Liz Hatcher, Melanie Herring, Bill Higgins, Eric Hough, Brenda Inskeep, Brian Isson, Melody Kehl, Judy Kennedy, Jim Kopitzke, Diane Laush, Paul Lehman, Grant Loomis, Jon Mann, Alison McGowan, Craig Miller, Mike Moore, Pete Moulton, Dave Pearson, Dave Powell, Cindy Radamaker, Kurt Radamaker (KR), Ken Rosenberg (KR0), Myron Scott, Leanna Shaberly, James Smith, Sig Stangeland, Mark Stevenson, Walter Thurber, Marceline Vanderwater, Jim & Betsy Walker, Magill Weber, Russ Widner,

# Field Trip Reports

## San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area – April

12 - The San Pedro River Valley constitutes such a valuable 40-mile long grove of cottonwood and willow trees for migratory birds that it was designated as a Riparian National Conservation Area in 1987 by the federal government. I was accompanied by six other Audubon members to explore portions of this large area on this day. Although our trip list was impressive, it proved that spring migration was still getting underway, with more species to appear in the coming weeks.

The grounds of Holy Trinity Monastery in St. David are not within the Conservation Area, but it is a famous starting point in birding this area from the north. The highlights here had to be a hovering Osprey over the pond, a Gray Hawk in flight seen from the gift shop parking area, two Swainson's and one Zone-tailed Hawks, a perched, possible nesting Cooper's Hawk in a tree, and distinguishing Western's and Cassin's Kingbirds, Gray Flycatcher, and Say's Phoebe. Our walks here included one through a mesquite forest with a beautiful view of the narrow river. Other birds identified on this property include Black-throated Gray Warbler, Eurasian Collared-Dove, Bell's Vireo, Hooded Oriole, Barn Swallow, and Chipping Sparrow.

As is common with a first location for a field trip, and the morning, we spent over three hours at St. David, but next we moved south and along the San Pedro River (and within the Conservation Area) to the historical ghost

town of Fairbank. After lunch, we started a walk through more mesquite forest with impressions of a fire here in recent years. We had added Lesser Goldfinch and Black-throated Sparrow in the picnic area, but our most amazing observation and humorous comment was the mention of the Vermilion Flycatcher being a "trash bird" because of its frequent and numerous sightings!

We traveled back to the highway south into the town of Tombstone, and back to the river at the Charleston bridge during the early and middle afternoon. This area had a view and access to the widest parts of the River at this time. From the parking area, we walked down the bank to the water, and walked along the shore. Here we observed Yellow Warblers, beautiful Yellowrumped Warblers (in breeding plumage, which we are not accustomed to, in desert areas), a couple of Common Yellowthroats, Wilson's Warbler, Summer Tanager, Vermilion Flycatcher, and Song Sparrow, as well as hearing a Ladderbacked Woodpecker. The most notable find by a few of us from on the bridge itself was a couple of Cassin's Finches, and separating them from House Finches. Cassin's Finches were rather common in southern Arizona this past winter.

Three of the group had to return to Phoenix this day, and left after this location, so we did not continue to more areas south along the San Pedro, but the rest of us decided to go on to Ash Canyon in the late afternoon. This was my first visit to this area,

which basically is the yard of Mary J. Ballator, and her Bed and Breakfast, and worked out to be the best stop for the weekend for the variety of species seen in a short time. Two locations within the yard with lawn chairs or benches are available for birders to watch a variety of feeders, and we observed five species of hummingbirds, including Broad-billed and Lucifer, Acorn and Arizona Woodpeckers, Mexican Jay, Bridled Titmouse, Green-tailed and Canyon Towhees, Dark-eyed (Gray-headed) Juncos, one first-of-season Black-headed Grosbeak, and a Scott's Oriole. As we were leaving, a Wild Turkey walked up the side of the property and hopped the wall, seemingly to get a seed snack as the sun set. We added nineteen trip species in about an hour here.

The remaining four of us continued our birdwatching on Sunday morning in the famous canyons of the Huachuca Mountains. We climbed up the narrow winding road of Carr Canyon, stopping occasionally to listen for birds, walked within a lower elevation picnic area, and ended at Reef Townsite campground. Early, along the road, we saw Northern Cardinal, Mourning Dove, and Cassin's Kingbird; a Scott's Oriole was seen and heard well at the picnic area; and several Grace's Warblers, Yellow-eyed Juncos, and American Robins were found and observed at the high elevation campground. We stopped at The Carr House (historical visitor center) on the way back down, and I saw a Rufous and

Magnificent Hummingbird at feeders there. Perhaps the best, and most unusual, sighting on the side of the road down, was the vibrant activity of hummingbirds near a tree; we found they, along with Bushtits and Ruby-crowned Kinglets, were mobbing, and then chasing, a Northern Pygmy-Owl!

My wife and I were the only ones to continue and finish our weekend trip by visiting the two most famous canyons in this area, Miller and Ramsey. We had not been to these birding locations, especially known for their hummingbirds, for many years, so it was interesting to see the changes. Miller Canyon hosts Beatty's Guest Ranch; Tom showed us his pond and its separate population of Ramsey Canyon leopard frogs, and we watched numerous hummingbirds at the public viewing feeders. But hummingbird activity was minimal at this time of day and this early in the season, especially at the Ramsey Canyon feeders. I did add a Hepatic Tanager along the trail from the visitor center, and also saw an Acorn Woodpecker, and a deer. A great end to our birding trip was seeing the resident Whiskered Screech-Owl in a nesting hole in a tree outside the gift shop/visitor center. I counted close to 90 bird species for the weekend. Of note, also, was a large advertising sign near the Preserve for the sale of Ramsey Canyon Bed and Breakfast. By the time you read this, maybe it was sold, but the volunteer in the visitor center told me the asking price was \$5 to \$6 million, so it may not be a quick sale! - Richard Kaiser

**Patagonia Loop - May 3** - Thirteen of us met in Patagonia at 6:30 am, 03 May. The trip started out with near overload on bird species at the Patton's back yard. Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, Violet-crowned Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, flocks of Lazuli Buntings, Lark Sparrows, Pine Siskins, Blue Grosbeak, Vermilion Flycatcher and both Summer and Western Tanagers seemed every where. Gray Hawks and Black Vultures flew overhead. Along Harshaw Creek Road we found inquisitive Dusky-capped Flycatcher, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Scott's Oriole and a Zone-tailed Hawk on its nest. A bit farther down the road was a Cooper's Hawk on its nest with singing Bell's Vireo and a Yellow-breasted Chat below it. At the Patagonia Roadside Rest south of town, we had Warbling Vireos, Canyon Towhees, a Peregrine Falcon on its cliff edge nest and lunch under a Sycamore tree with screaming Thick-billed Kingbirds, Hooded Orioles, and Ash-throated Flycatchers overhead. At Kino Springs we added a few water birds, including a pair of Black-bellied Whistling Ducks, and two nests almost side by side of a Great Blue Heron and a Great-horned Owl. On Rio Rico Road northwest of Nogales we had Cassin's and Western Kingbirds together and a large flock of 50 Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and a few White-faced Ibis.

Finally in Madera Canyon a flock of 9 Wild Turkeys and many more feeder birds were at Santa Rita Lodge. Above the amphitheater area we had stunning looks at the male Flame-colored Tanager and added our 6th species of hummingbird, Broad-tailed. A short hike up the Super Trail at

the top parking lot added Painted Redstart and the last bird of the day, Northern Pygmy-Owl, which sat tamely for everyone to get a look at. We ended up with 108 species seen and heard, and nary a visual bigot among us. - Dave Pearson

**San Francisco Peaks - June 14** - We did a complete loop around the peaks which still had lots of snow clinging to the higher slopes on Humphrey's and Agassiz Peaks. We started out at the Snow Bowl hiking along the Kachina trail. Birds were fairly quiet but we did manage to round up many of the usual suspects including Red-breasted Nuthatch, Mountain Chickadee, Hairy Woodpecker, Pine Siskin, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, and numbers of singing Hermit Thrushes. Further down the mountain at the old Veit Ranch we had Red-faced Warblers, Red Crossbills (heard), Clark's Nutcracker (heard), and singing Cordilleran Flycatchers. In Hart Prairie we found several breeding Dusky Flycatchers in gooseberry and Bebb willow associations.

At Fern Mountain the group was treated to splendid views of Mountain Bluebird, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Green-tailed Towhee. At Little Spring the group got excellent looks at a stunning male Williamson's Sapsucker, and later, a male Red-breasted Sapsucker. We also managed to find a breeding MacGillivray's Warbler in the large gooseberry bushes near the spring. On the way out to highway 89 we had a Townsend's Solitaire and further up the highway, a Lewis' Woodpecker. About 50 species for the day. - Charles Babbitt



# Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

**W**e've alluded in the past to the difficulty of doing quizzes involving colorful birds in a non-color format, so I thought it only fair to pin down both the family and the region of the country for you. And the four sites I've mentioned in the clue should be your priority locations for birding this fall. Don't forget that the birds are not on the same calendar that we are. We think fall begins on September 21, but for some families, such as shorebirds, fall began a month or six weeks ago. The best time to visit the four aforementioned hotspots for passerine migration is right now through the first couple weeks of September. By the time our heat and humidity finally drop, western warblers will already be, for the most part, south of the border.

High elevation breeders tend to follow the mountain ridges south which makes Ord and Pinal Peak especially good this time of year, but the list of migrating (and overwintering) warblers, both eastern and western, seen in the past three years at GRA and BTA is impressive. I have personally seen all three of our quiz birds at three of the four locations as well as at the Granite Reef Recreation Area along the Salt River east of Phoenix. Migrating warblers like water and deciduous trees. Don't forget to check out your backyard on a daily basis if you have one or both of these warbler attractions. We once had a September Chestnut-sided Warbler picking gnats out of a window screen in our house near the Scottsdale Greenbelt.

**A)–Good photo, difficult bird**  
Our first warbler, bathing as members of this family are so often seen doing, has four obvious plumage features worth noting: the broad, light supercilium (the stripe above the eye); the contrasting dark auricular (cheek) patch; the dark flank streaking on otherwise light underparts; and two prominent wingbars which seem to match the color of the supercilium and the underparts. You probably have the feeling this would be an easy bird to identify if only the image were in color, and you would be right.

If we begin with the cheek patch framed almost entirely by the eye stripe and the matching light throat, and take into consideration immature fall birds, we could conceivably have twelve candidates for this photo. But eight of those would be considered "eastern" warblers. Aren't you thankful for the "western" clue. Here are the eastern possibilities ruled out by geography: Golden-winged, Magnolia, Cape May, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle), Black-throated Green, Blackburnian, Cerulean, and Palm. Keep in mind, though, that I've

personally seen six of these warblers in Arizona, all in the fall, and four of them were recorded in the Valley within the past twelve months. Remember, as you enjoy fall migration, the old birders' aphorism which says, "sooner or later all birds will show up at all locations."

So, if we know we're going "western," our task has been made immeasurably easier. There are only four possibilities. The neatly outlined cheek patch says Black-throated Gray, Townsend's, Hermit, or Olive. In no plumage do Hermit Olive Warbler show streaking on the sides, so we're down to two, both with flank streaking, both with prominent wingbars. Look carefully at that dark auricular patch on our quiz bird. Directly below the eye is a small "cup" of lighter color which seems to match the color of the auricular frame. Townsend's? Yes, always in all plumages. Black-throated Gray? Never in any plumage. This first fall female Townsend's Warbler, spectacular even in yellow and dark olive without the adult male's blacks, was photographed at her bath in a spring on Mt. Ord, first week of October, 2006.

**B)–Good photo, difficult bird**  
Do we see any similarities between our second quiz bird and the first? Other than the fact that this one is also taking a bath? Well, a couple. This bird has light wingbars and a dark crown like our Townsend's, but that's about it. If you combine the clean face and prominent eye, which makes the bird look surprised, with the obviously dark, probably black throat, there is only one western warbler match, the Hermit Warbler, almost as spectacular in its contrasting yellow, black, and white as the Townsend's is in its yellow and black.

So, why was this a difficult bird to identify from this image? Because in the North Cascade Mountain range of Washington, Hermits and Townsend's overlap and, you guessed it, hybridize. There are three plumage elements apparent here which might be talking points for hybrid junkies. There is a hint of a cheek patch. There is a hint of dark streaking along the flanks, although this might be an artifact of the bird's being soaking wet. And the black crown extends farther down toward the bill than any of the guide books show.

In my humble opinion, this is not a Hermit x Townsend's hybrid. These hybrids tend toward one of two templates: either a Hermit face pattern with Townsend's underparts or, conversely, a Townsend's face pattern with some dark streaking on white underparts. The former typically shows some yellow on the breast beneath the black throat. Our quiz bird's breast

appears even lighter than its face, indicating white, not yellow. The latter shows a much more prominent auricular patch than our bird and very obvious flank streaking.

If hybrid enthusiasts want to argue it is impossible to rule out Hermit x Townsend's without color, I will accede, but I've seen the color image and this bird's breast is white as the driven snow and the bird mirrors photographs of adult male Hermits in Warblers by Jon Dunn and Kimball Garrett which, if you're interested, is the warbler "Bible." This male Hermit Warbler was photographed at his bath in a spring on Pinal Peak, first week of August, 2005.

**C)–Good photo, easy bird**  
There are two things which stand out on our last quiz bird. The obvious one is the bold, white eyering. Less obvious but noticeable is the light patch, possibly white, on the underparts centered around the legs, between the slightly darker breast area and the slightly darker undertail coverts. There are only three North American warblers with this bold eyering, all similar, all closely related, all part of the *Vermivora* genus: Virginia's, Nashville, and Colima.

Colima, a Texas breeder in Big Bend, is unlikely to be migrating through Arizona and, to my knowledge, has never been recorded here. In a color photo, Virginia's is a gray bird with patches of yellow. Those patches are on the breast and the undertail coverts. In a color photo, Nashville is a yellow bird with a gray head and upper back.

Structurally, there is one difference between Virginia's and Nashville. The latter has a noticeably shorter tail, and our quiz bird's tail appears smaller in length than its undertail coverts. This feature would suggest Nashville. Is it possible to identify this as a Nashville without color? I believe it is based on a small gem of information given to me by my birding mentor, Pat Beall, when I first came to Arizona. Nashville Warblers wear white underpants!

Virginia's are uniformly gray from the small yellow breast patch all the way to the yellow undertail coverts. Nashvilles will show a patch of white on their yellow underparts, around the legs just forward of their yellow undertail coverts. This Nashville's white underpants are discernible as the light patch around its legs just behind the plant stalk. It was photographed at Arivaca Cienega, first week of August, 2002.

Passerines are passing through. Now is the time to bird the ridge tops and riparian strips to find that rare, vagrant warbler.

# Color-flagged Hudsonian Godwits and Whimbrels

Richard Johnson - national USFWS Shorebird Coordinator

Over the last two years, we have been color-flagging Whimbrels and Hudsonian Godwits on Chiloé Island, Chile. Over 20,000 each of godwits and Whimbrels spend the boreal winter in the vicinity of Chiloé. Using a canon-net, we have marked 323 Hudsonian Godwits and 135 Whimbrels. These birds will be sporting a red flag (the color for Chile) that is engraved with a unique two-letter/number combination on their upper left leg (tibiotarsus). Flag letters/numbers are read like we read a book, from left to right. They will also have a combination of a metal band and a color ring on their upper right leg. For godwits, this combination will be yellow/metal for 2007 and orange/metal for 2008. Combinations should be read as yellow color band over a metal band.

For Whimbrels, the combination will be blue/metal for 2007 and yellow/metal for 2008. Remember that anatomical directions are the way the bird is facing, not necessarily the way you are looking at the bird.

Besides banding the birds, we collected blood, took measurements, assessed molt, and collected samples for Avian Influenza (taken by the Chilean agency, Servicio Agrícola y Ganadero). The blood will be used in a genetics study to determine the origin of the Hudsonian Godwits and Whimbrels wintering on Chiloé Island. Re-sighting of flagged birds will help us determine their migration routes. There are tentative plans to attached satellite transmitters to Whimbrels next year.

Please report any flag and color-band observations to Jim Johnson ([jim\\_a\\_johnson@fws.gov](mailto:jim_a_johnson@fws.gov); 907-786-3423) or Brad Andres ([brad\\_andres@fws.gov](mailto:brad_andres@fws.gov); 303-275-2324). Last year we had a re-sighting of a Hudsonian Godwit in Alaska and a Whimbrel in southern California. Colleagues in Colombia have also color-flagged Whimbrels this past spring in the Sanquianga National Park. They marked 38 individuals with the following combination: metal/orange or black on upper right leg, nothing on lower right, inscribed medium green flag/yellow flag on upper left leg, and nothing on lower left. Please report these birds to Richard Johnston ([calidris@calidris.org.co](mailto:calidris@calidris.org.co) or [rjohnston@calidris.org.co](mailto:rjohnston@calidris.org.co)).

## An Anytime, Anywhere Celebration of Nature in the City

Simple citizen-science project reaches urbanites of all ages. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology is a membership institution dedicated to interpreting and conserving the earth's biological diversity through research, education, and citizen science focused on birds. Visit the Lab's web site at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu>.

Ithaca, N.Y. Nature has the power to soothe and enthuse. More people are finding that out as they join the free, year-round "Celebrate Urban Birds!" citizen-science project from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. From schools, hospitals, and senior centers, to wellness programs, scout packs, and military bases, participants are reaping the benefits of a closer connection to the natural world and a new appreciation for city birds.

A girl in 4-H changed her mind about city birds after taking part in the project: "At first I didn't like urban birds," she said. "I thought of them as pests. Then I realized that they are just like me and other kids. We are ignored or people just see us as pests or don't see us at all...yet if you look a little deeper you can see that on the inside we are pretty unique and cool!"

People of all ages and backgrounds participate in Celebrate Urban Birds through gardening, cultural activities and citizen-science. For the citizen-science part of the project, participants watch city

birds for 10 minutes, check off 15 target species of birds, and send the information through the mail or the Internet to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Once enough data are gathered, scientists hope to learn more about how birds survive in cities and how they use urban green spaces such as parks, rooftop gardens, and even potted plants on balconies for food, resting sites, and shelter.

Individuals can participate on their own or through public events organized by local groups. Celebrate Urban Birds has partnered with more than 2,000 organizations to hold special "birdy" events featuring the arts, science, gardening, or other ways to draw people into bird study and observation. While supplies last, everyone who signs up will receive a Celebrate Urban Birds kit in English and Spanish with two colorful urban birds posters, educational materials about birds and urban greening, a data form, and a packet of sunflower seeds to plant in pots and gardens. More than 60,000 free kits have been distributed.

After receiving his kit, one elementary school youngster with Down syndrome declared, "I will take these posters home and put them up on my wall forever because I'm going to be a scientist when I grow up!" Teachers find that the 10-minute bird observation can be done within a class period, and it reinforces

math, reading, scientific, artistic, and team-building skills. One teacher noted, "Our group of middle school boys was impressed with being able to help with a project sponsored by a university."

Some groups go beyond a single event by greening their neighborhood creating habitat for birds on balconies, rooftops, front stoops, or community spaces. Others are tapping into the arts, creating dances, drawings, murals, sculptures, puppet shows, and short films based on city birds. The Celebrate Urban Birds web site has lots of resources and suggestions about how to craft an event or project for [libraries](#), [nature centers](#), [schools and youth groups](#), [community gardens](#), home-school [groups](#), or individuals.

Winners have been chosen for the project's first "Beautiful Birds in Urban Places" video and photo contest. Marian Mendez of Hialeah, Florida, captured first prize with her images of birds found in her back yard. She said, "I like to single out one bird and watch it for a while, trying to see the personality and mind behind it. And I'm out in the fresh air, getting sunshine and a new perspective on life." You can see Marian's photos and other great entries on the web site. Stay tuned for the next photo contest! Learn more about Celebrate Urban Birds and sign up at [www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org](http://www.CelebrateUrbanBirds.org)!

### 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/](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:devaburns@aol.com)

### Opinions

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

### 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.

This publication is printed on recycled paper.



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