



The Cactus Wren·dition



Volume LX1, No. 3

Fall 2010



Red Phalarope

Photo by Rich Ditch

Programs 2010

September 7 2010

Dr. Gerald Rosenthal **Sonoran Desert Life: Understanding, Insights, and Enjoyment** Dr. Gerald A. Rosenthal, Scottsdale resident and retired Professor of Biological Sciences and Toxicology, spent a decade observing and documenting the flora and fauna of the Sonoran Desert. He has compiled his knowledge into an informative and lavishly illustrated field guide with an emphasis on botany. Dr. Rosenthal will share some of his many images that are part of his research and stitch together fragments of the vast web of life of this unique ecosystem. Dorrance Hall



Photo by Scott Davies

October 2010

Larry Arbanas Documentary filmmaker Larry Arbanas spent the last few years on bird filming expeditions to Guatemala, Baffin Island in the Arctic, Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Texas, Oregon, California, Mexico and most recently the Gulf of Mexico. Arbanas' Earthwhile Nature Productions is based in Kern County, CA.



Videographer Larry Arbanas in Madera Canyon

Photo by Ben Clock/CLO
925.788.6986

November 2, 2010

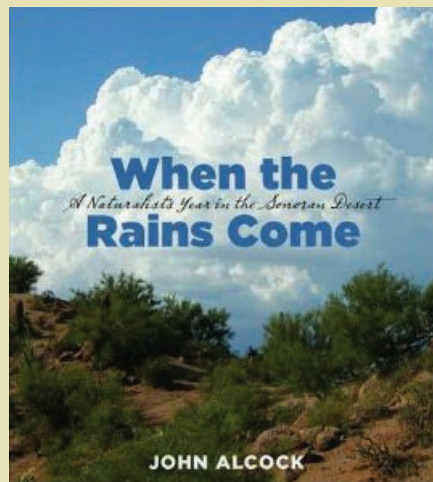
David and Diane Reesor **Three Birds, Three Locations.** Enjoy a outstanding evening with photographer David Reesor and his wife Diane. This evening's program is a sampler of three remarkable sightings-Dutch Harbor, Alaska: The eagles swooping down for

a meal; Churchill, Manitoba: The Snowy Owl with his winter friends the polar bear and red fox; Seychelles, Africa: 300,000 pairs of Sooty Terns and their offspring. Dorrance Hall



December 7, 2010

Dr. John Alcock Discover the virtues of returning to the same place repeatedly to really get to know the nature of change in the desert. Dr. John Alcock is Professor Emeritus at ASU specializing in Animal Behavior and the evolution of diversity in insect mating systems. He will have copies of his new book for sale and will graciously sign them. Webster Auditorium



Committees/Support

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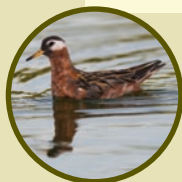
480-829-8209

"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.



Cover Photo: Red Phalarope. June 3 at 7:06 pm. at Higley Ponds.

President's Message

Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

Let me first say that I am honored to be addressing the membership of Maricopa Audubon Society as its new President. Many outstanding men and women have come before me, so I know that I have some large shoes to fill. I hope to maintain the high standards for the organization that they have set.

Maricopa Audubon Society has many great traditions, foremost of which is our long-standing commitment to conservation. I say commitment because, unlike some organizations that talk about conservation when it is fashionable, MAS has long been down in the trenches with other dedicated organizations allied against the forces that would alter and degrade the priceless natural treasures that we have in Arizona and want to leave as a legacy for succeeding generations to enjoy.

Our dedication to the health of the environment does not lessen our interest in learning more about the wonders of the natural world. We will continue our tradition of providing informative and engaging programs at our monthly meetings. At the same time, we will be looking for new ways to involve our membership and share knowledge.

And, speaking of involving our membership, if you are reading this and have never been to a monthly meeting, it is time to attend one! If it has been a long time since you last came to a meeting, come again and see some old friends. If you don't have a ride, call me and we will arrange transportation for you. If you don't like to go to events where you don't know anyone,

come to one meeting and I guarantee that when you leave you will know someone! You might get to know five other members. We are a friendly bunch.

For those of you who do not know me, I have been around Maricopa Audubon Society since I moved to the Valley from Tucson in the early 80s, except for a brief period when I lived in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania and served as the President of the much smaller Seven Mountains Audubon Society.

I have had a more than thirty year career as an environmental planner, writer, and editor. I have been a birder almost all my life after a scoutmaster focused my interest in every critter that walked, swam, or flew to a more detailed study of birds. I just returned from my tenth trip to Costa Rica where I had the pleasure of introducing three other members to some of my favorite places, birds, and people.

Now we are ready for an exciting year of learning about the natural world and helping to make it better.



Birding in Costa Rica.

Notes & Announcements

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. 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

Unwanted Catalogs

Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalog 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.

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 Laurie Nessel know at laurie@laurienessel.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 or Paul Baicich at 410-992-9736 or 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 and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit www.casacaballoblanco.com.

Land of the Quetzal

Rich Kern and his brother, Jim, are looking for twenty partners to join us in the purchase of the 486 acre parcel, which is adjacent to Los Quetzales National Park and across the Savegre River from Los Santos National Preserve in Costa Rica. Preserving an important piece of quetzal habitat is a big part of our motivation in choosing the Savegre tract; the area is one of the best places to see this beautiful bird. Besides birds, it is also possible to see puma, ocelot, the little margay, jaguar and tapir. Half of the shares for the project have been spoken for. If you would like more information and a copy of the DVD please contact Rich Kern at kernnature@aol.com. (N.B. The Kern brothers project is independent from Audubon.)

Book Store Selections

We now have a selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike. Remember that Friends of Maricopa Audubon members get a 10% discount and that your purchase helps to support our event, education and conservation efforts.

Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)

Check out their website for events around the state--www.azwildlife.com

Museum of Northern Arizona

They sponsor Venture trips that explore and discover the Colorado Plateau in the Four Corners area. For more information contact Lisa Lamberson at 928-774-5211 x241 or llamberson@mna.mus.az.us.

Environmental Fund

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

contact Laine Seton at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: 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.

The Dovetail Directory

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

Shade-grown Coffee

If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co--www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491. And another from Kenn Kaufman is www.birdsandbeans.com

More Birding and Nature Festivals

www.americanbirding.org, and www.birdinghotspot.com

SUBMISSIONS

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your submissions to the Editor - Emily Morris. Check the back page for address/email. Attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. Please send any pictures to complement your article directly to me as well. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

First Ever Camp Audubon Arizona

Emily Morris

from the editor

This summer I was lucky enough to run the first ever Camp Audubon at the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center. I can say that hardly ever have I worked harder or been more rewarded than with this program. I thank my lucky stars every day that, with the help of Audubon, I have found my calling.

Camp consisted of four one-week sessions with the themes of Beginning with Birds, Wet and Wild Arizona Waters, Conservation Crusaders and



The kids used binoculars every day on our nature walks, which we went on no matter how hot the weather.

Mysterious Mammals. We partnered with local Boys and Girls Clubs, so we could offer our program to local kids free of charge. There were about 18 kids each week, with several who attended all four weeks. It was amazing to see some of these kids, who started out barely knowing that they lived in a desert, pointing out Snowy Egrets and Abert's Towhees to me at the end of the week.

I could not have planned and carried out the program without the help of some amazing volunteers and quite a few "special



These girls are taking water samples from our stream to test its quality.

guests." Audubon Arizona's Education Director, Cathy Wise, showed the kids a Black-crowned Night Heron, Harris's Hawk, Peregrine Falcon and a prairie dog—all of which the campers adored! One of the biggest highlights was Pierre Deviche's morning program teaching the kids about the diversity of dragonflies and damselflies. The boys and girls could hardly contain themselves the moment Pierre walked in carrying his big net and told them that we would actually be catching the prehistoric insects. Pierre was followed by Gail Morris, who passed on her enthusiasm for Monarch Butterflies. I further worked my ASU connections by asking three PhD student-friends to teach the kids about ants, bees and snakes—all of whom brought live animals that excited the kids more than anything.

It's a wonderful feeling to pass on some knowledge and enthusiasm to these children that will hopefully stay with them for a lifetime. I'll finish off with one story that sums up how rewarding

even a few short weeks with these kids can be. I was introducing the concept of pond-dipping to the campers, which entails searching around the edges of the ponds to find what macro-invertebrates are living

there and what that might say about the health of the water (i.e. Greater diversity means better quality). I said, "Ok, are you guys ready to be scientists?" and one girl yelled, "No! I can't be a scientist, I don't know how to do that!" I was taken aback, but assured her that it was ok...I was there to teach them. At the end of every day, I always go around the room and ask what one thing that they each learned that day was. The girl who had been afraid of the pond-dipping said, "Today I learned that I can be a scientist."



PhD student, Adam Siegel, teaches the kids about honey bees.



Two girls pretend to be elk.

Night Calls

By David Chorlton

With a kiss of darkness comes the moth
cloaked in dust to the light
of a lamp by the latch on the door.
We sleep in uncharted territory

each night with our borders open
and waiting for messages
from creatures with whom we share
the floating world to enter

our dreams. When the unexpected
owl in the tree at the window
calls, the notes glow against the silence
and line our ears with threads and small bones.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Mike Plagens

SEP - NOV 2010

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:

- Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.
- 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.

***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. Also get reminders of MAS field trips by email. Founded by naturalist and field trip chairperson 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/

Thursday, September 16th

Bat Colony off Camelback Rd. Bats emerge from a flood diversion tunnel near 40th St. and Camelback Road just as the sun sets. We'll enjoy an early dinner at Chelsea's Kitchen (\$\$), 5040 N. 40th St., Phoenix, then walk along the Arizona Canal about ½ mile to the colony. Birds along this stretch should include Lesser Nighthawk and Peach-faced Lovebird among others. When the light is almost faded the bats stream out to feed on insects often many miles away. If you want to eat first be at the restaurant around 5:10PM – sunset is at 6:30PM and we should stream out of the restaurant around 6:10PM and walk along the north side of the canal. There is nearby parking @ s.w. corner of Camelback & 40th St. Good shoes, water (it will likely be hot still) and maybe a small light are suggested. Difficulty 1 to 2. **Leader: Mike Plagens** mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224 for reservations.

Saturday, Sept 18

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Close focussing (six feet or less) binoculars

are preferred. Learn to identify local butterflies including Painted Lady, Queen, and Fiery Skipper as well as common dragonflies and dragonflies such as Western Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer, Blue-ringed Dancer and Familiar Bluet. Meet 7:30AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. 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: Janet and Bob Witzeman

Saturday, Oct 16

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Close focussing (six feet or less) binoculars are preferred. Learn to identify local butterflies including Painted Lady, Queen, and Fiery Skipper as well as common dragonflies and dragonflies such as Western Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer, Blue-ringed Dancer and Familiar Bluet. Meet 7:30AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. 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: Janet and Bob Witzeman

Saturday, Oct 16

Reay Road ponds & Gila Box RNCA: Although many birders travel to the Willcox Playa, few know about the beautiful birding areas north along the Gila River in Graham County. This trip will stop at two of the better sites in the area: the Reay Road ponds in Thatcher, and the Gila Box Riparian National Conservation Area east of Safford.

The Reay Road ponds are constructed wetlands for recharge of treated wastewater. They draw a very wide variety of water, marsh and shore birds. The Gila Box RNCA is a

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Mike Plagens

field trips

magnificent riparian area along the Gila and San Francisco Rivers and Bonita Creek. Migrating songbirds (especially warblers) are a highlight at Gila Box. The entire Gila River valley around Safford is a magnet for migrating and wintering raptors as well.

Walking is easy (mostly on flat surfaces), but we will be doing rather a lot of it. Elevations are moderate (about 3,000 feet) and roads are generally good. However, some roads are dirt, and there is some annoying washboard dirt road at Gila Box. Passenger cars should not have any problems, but expect some rattling from the washboard sections of road. Lunch will be in the field, but we'll have the opportunity to stop for dinner in Safford.

Limit: 12 Difficulty 3 – walking about 5 miles

Leader: Tom Gaskill gaskillthomas@gmail.com or 602-712-0635 for reservations.

Wednesday, Oct 20

Coffee, Smoothies or Beer and then Birds at Cave Creek: Dusk into evening trip beginning at 5:00PM at the Cave Creek Coffee Co. After some refreshments we will drive to Spur Cross Trailhead for an early evening stroll in search of migrants, possibly some owls, and maybe a snake or roaming tarantula. Short hike with some rocky trails. Bring water, flash- or head-light, and sturdy shoes. Meet at CCC, 6033 E. Cave Creek Rd. Difficulty 2

Leader: John Gunn and/or Kevin Smith Contact Mike, mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224 for reservations.

Friday, Oct 22

Tempe Town Lake: Begin at Tempe Market Place meeting at 6:45AM. Water and arboreal birds will be viewed right from the lot. Afterwards we will venture to a few other nearby urban spots based on earlier scouting. Finished by late morning. Meet at Tempe Market Place, 2000 E. Rio Salado Pkwy, Tempe. Difficulty 1

Leader: Kathe Anderson
kathe.coot@cox.net.

Saturday, Nov 6

Phoenix Zoo & Papago Ponds: We will meet on the bridge-entrance to the Phoenix Zoo, 455 N. Galvin Pkwy., at 8:00 AM. Migratory ducks will be returning for winter, warblers and other neotropical migrants will be in the trees and verdant vegetation. These are free-living birds, but are often habituated to people and thus easy to observe and identify. Walkways are easy and handicap accessible. Zoo entrance fee not required, however the city may begin charging for a parking permit. Difficulty 1

Leader: Mike Foley
mfoley33@gmail.com.

Saturday, Nov 13

Spur Cross Ranch – Birds and other Autumn Wildlife. Cave Creek is a riparian oasis running down from the New River Mountains past the town of Cave Creek and into the dry hot desert. Magnificent saguaros stand in close proximity to grand Fremont Cottonwood and lush Goodding's Willow. Native and migrating birds stop for water and to find food. We will look especially for fall migrants, but will likely pause to look at butterflies,

wildflowers and dragonflies. Short hike with some rocky trails. Bring water, snack, and sturdy shoes. Meet at Cave Creek Coffee Co., 6033 E. Cave Creek Rd. at 7:00AM. Optional refreshments at CCC after the hike. Difficulty 2

Leader: John Gunn and/or Kevin Smith Contact Mike, mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224 for reservations.

Monday, Nov 22

Scottsdale Urban Ponds: We will walk the lakes at McCormick Ranch and end up at Chaparral Lake. Shorebirds and early ducks should have arrived and there is always the possibility of something out of the ordinary. Meet 7:15AM @ at the Chart House parking lot, at the SE corner of Scottsdale Road and McCormack Parkway. Difficulty 1

Leader: Kathe Anderson
kathe.coot@cox.net.

Friday, Nov 26

Rackensack Wash: What better way is there to burn off that extra slice of pie than to go birding? Hike along Rackensack Wash upstream and then down from the Seven Springs Road. Trail start is about 5 miles n. of Bartlett Lake turn off. Some migrants can be expected in the cottonwoods and willows along the riparian stretches and many desert species in chaparral areas. Meet 7:00AM @ at Fry's parking lot, at the SE corner of Tatum & Shea Blvd., Phoenix. Difficulty 2+

Leader: Mike Plagens
mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224 for reservations.

Arizona Field Ornithologists State Meeting

October 8 – 10, 2010

The fourth annual state meeting will be held at Prescott College in Prescott this year, and both members and nonmembers are invited to attend this enjoyable and educational event. Saturday's programs will feature several expert presentations on Arizona's birdlife and field research in the state, plus reports and future plans for the many AZFO activities. An evening dinner will highlight Carl Tomoff, Professor at Prescott College, as

keynote speaker. Tomoff, who has four decades of field experience in Arizona, teaches classes in Environmental Studies. On Friday afternoon and Sunday morning, you can participate in workshops or mini-field expeditions to lesser known birding areas in and around Prescott.

For more information on the programs, locations, directions, and preregistering online or by mail, go to the AZFO website (azfo.org) and click on AZFO Meetings. The deadline for registering is September 25.

Of Birds and Dragons....

Pierre Deviche

During the hot Arizona summer, it doesn't take long after dawn for most songbirds to stop singing and for their activity to decrease. Many species can then become difficult to find and observe. But stop at just about any piece of water – your local stream, ditch, or pond – and you will see that for many other animals the day is just beginning. This is the case of many insects, including odonates, which include Zygoptera (damselflies) and Anisoptera (dragonflies). After spending a few early morning hours birding, it doesn't take much effort to switch to another, equally exciting field activity: odonating!

Approximately 130 species of odonates have been officially recorded in Arizona. Some, such as the Blue Dasher, Western Pondhawk, and Common Green Darner are common and widespread. Others are rare, live in a small area and, in some cases, are



Western Pondhawk

vagrants that have been found just a couple of times. Compared to other states, Arizona is not blessed with a great diversity of odonates. For example, New Jersey, with an area less than 10% that of Arizona, has almost 200 odonate species. But this kind of difference is largely compensated by other factors. For one, the mild winter climate of southern Arizona makes it that one can observe odonates year-round and not just during summer as is generally the case in regions with cold winters. A December walk around a Phoenix pond may reveal Common Green Darners, Variegated Meadowhawks, Flame Skimmers, Blue-ringed Dancers, and with some luck several other species.

In addition, the proximity of Arizona to Mexico makes it that, just as is the case for birds, species that are regularly – and in some cases commonly –



Blue Dasher

seen in Arizona are normally found nowhere or close to nowhere else north of the border. This is the case with such spectacular species as the Malachite Darner, Arizona Snaketail, Apache Spiketail, and Spot-winged Meadowhawk. Arizona is known for its diversity of dancers (*Argia* sp.) and here as well, several species live in Arizona that are not normally found in other states.

Another attractive aspect of studying odonates in Arizona is that, despite a lot of detailed work by many individuals over the years and a rapidly growing interest by the general public, we still know relatively little – at least compared to birds – about the geographic distribution, temporal distribution during the year, and ecology and behavior of odonates. As is the case for birds, you don't need to be a professional scientist to contribute to our knowledge on this subject: Anyone with a keen pair of eyes, patience, and a good identification book can help. Plus, odonates are silent and so you don't have to worry about having to identify them based on calls! New species are added to the Arizona official list on a regular basis and we are still learning about early and late flight dates of many species. Continuing observations in future years may eventually reveal changes in geographic distribution and/or flight dates that we may be able to relate to climate changes, such as are predicted to occur in the southwest USA over the next decades.

The past years have seen a great increase in interest in odonates and an explosion of books and web sites dealing with them. We recently developed (yet another!) web site on the subject: <http://azdragonfly.net>. In doing so we decided to restrict ourselves to species that have been officially recorded in Arizona. A main objective

was to illustrate the variation that exists within species. One challenge to identifying odonates, particularly some groups of Zygoptera, is that even within a given population coloration can vary extensively as a function of sex, temperature, age, and other factors. We wanted to illustrate this variation by showing not just one, but whenever possible multiple pictures of the same species. Another feature of the azdragonfly.net web site is that the photo collection (currently approximately 800 pictures of over 100 species) can be searched by any criterion such as county, month, location, or any combination thereof. This should give you an idea – although it will not provide a comprehensive list – of the species that you can expect to see in a given area and/or at a specific time of the year. Finally, we wanted to provide some information about specific locations in Arizona that are easily accessible and have a good diversity of odonates. For this we created a Locations web page that shows these locations and, for those needing directions, includes an interactive Google map. This is a good place to start but remember that especially during the summer, just about



Common Green Darner

any body of water in Arizona is likely to have some odonates, both Zygoptera and Anisoptera.

So, when you've finished your morning birding, don't head back for the air-conditioned car quite yet. Instead, leave the bird identification book behind and grab the dragonfly identification book. See what you find out there and how you can personally add to our knowledge of these fascinating insects. They were around long before the first dinosaurs and may teach us a thing or two that we don't yet know.

Email: deviche@asu.edu

Field Trip Report — Q Ranch, June 3-6, 2010

Mike Plagens

The Maricopa Audubon Society sponsored a 4-day field trip to the Q Ranch on June 3-6, 2010, with co-leaders Cynthia Donald and Ken Furtado. The historic Q Ranch is located in Gila County, just below the Mogollon Rim near the juncture of Gila-Coconino-Navajo counties. The ranch dates from the 1890s and several buildings from that period still exist. Former ranch owner Col. Jesse Ellison (1842-1934) played a controversial role in the infamous Pleasant Valley War. The Q also contains one of the three largest pre-historic Native American pueblos in the US.

Spring bypassed the ranch this year. Two late, hard freezes (May 2 and May 24) burned the new growth from the deciduous trees so most were still in the early stages of leafing out. Saturday temps rose into the 90s and Sunday peaked at 102 degrees.

Many birds that are normally ubiquitous at this time of year went completely or nearly unseen, including Black-headed Grosbeaks, Hairy Woodpeckers and Yellow Warblers. There were other anomalies as well. Turkey Vultures, usually in kettles of 6 or more birds, soared alone in every sighting. A persistent flock of about 20 Brown-headed Cowbirds

numbered a single identity-challenged European Starling amongst them.

The first observed fledglings of the season were Robins. Two spot-breasted, demanding fledglings kept Mom busy feeding them on the ground under the tall pine where the nest was located. The dramatic surprise of the previous week, a pair of vocal and conspicuous Common Black-Hawks, went unseen on this trip but have since returned.



Mountain Bluebird

Overall, 56 species of birds were observed, Mountain Bluebirds and elk were abundant, historic sites relating to early settlement and the Pleasant Valley War were visited, and a lecture and tour of the prehistoric pueblo was conducted by Dr. John Hohmann.

Turkey Vulture
Zone-tailed Hawk
Red-tailed Hawk
American Kestrel
Mourning Dove
White-throated Swift
Black-chinned Hummingbird
Broad-tailed Hummingbird
Acorn Woodpecker
Red-naped Sapsucker
Hairy Woodpecker
Northern Flicker (red-shafted)
Western Wood-Pewee
Cordilleran Flycatcher
Gray Flycatcher
Black Phoebe
Say's Phoebe
Ash-throated Flycatcher
Brown-crested Flycatcher
Cassin's Kingbird
Western Kingbird
Hutton's Vireo
Plumbeous Vireo
Steller's Jay
Western Scrub-Jay
Piñon Jay
Common Raven
American Crow
N. Rough-winged Swallow
Violet Green Swallow
Barn Swallow
Mountain Chickadee
White-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
Rock Wren
Mountain Bluebird
Western Bluebird
American Robin
Northern Mockingbird
European Starling
Yellow-rumped Warbler
Townsend's Warbler
Grace's Warbler
Painted Redstart
Yellow-breasted Chat
Hepatic Tanager
Western Tanager
Spotted Towhee
Brewer's Sparrow
Chipping Sparrow
Vesper Sparrow
Lark Sparrow
White-crowned Sparrow
Brown-headed Cowbird
Bullock's Oriole
Lesser Goldfinch

Steele Indian School Park - July 9th, 2010

On a Friday morning, seven nature observers convened within sight of the light rail train, fast food restaurants, and high-rise office buildings to survey this extensive city park for birds. Steele Indian School Park is located at the northeast corner of Central Ave. and Indian School Rd. in Phoenix. Desert ironwoods, velvet mesquite, palo verde and desert hackberry among many other plantings of native plants transported us to the desert far from the city and with many desert birds and mammals about we could easily imagine we had been transported. We found easy, handicap-accessible pathways through the beautifully designed garden.

Kathy soon spotted a coyote and a Harris' ground squirrel; there were adult and juvenile Audubon's cottontails. We found a number of birds feeding and caring for new fledglings demonstrating that native birds have indeed successfully colonized this xeriscape garden. The best bird for this location was a family group of Lucy's Warbler feeding on flower buds of desert hackberry. A Cactus Wren adult was methodically showing a pair of young how to forage for spiders and bugs on the trunks of mesquites. Fledgling Great-tailed Grackles, White-winged Doves and Brown-headed Cowbirds were also seen. Among typical desert birds we also saw were Curve-billed Thrasher, Gambel's Quail, Verdin, House Finch and Abert's Towhee.

MAS Board Members



BOB WITZEMAN (Conservation) has been a MAS member since his arrival in Phoenix in 1958. He became a MAS board member a few years later and has been active in chapter events since then.



CECILIA DENOGEÁN ESQUER (Secretary) is an Arizona Native – born and raised in Superior – her family moved to Phoenix when she was in the eighth grade. She is married to Elias Yescas Esquer; they have two children:

Andrea and Marcos. Cecilia holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Education, a Master of Arts degree in Spanish Literature and a Juris Doctorate (Law) degree from Arizona State University. Cecilia and her husband Elias became interested in birding during a trip to Belize. They took Herb Fibel's class and were hooked. Cecilia is still in the remedial stages of birding – but there is hope!



HERB FIBEL (Treasurer) was born in New York City and grew up in New Rochelle, NY; he graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a business degree. He moved to Arizona in 1962, and graduated from ASU College

of Law in 1970. He's a practicing attorney, though pretty much retired now. Herb served as membership chair from 1980-1982, as president from 1982-1988, and as treasurer 1988-2005. He was off the board for one year, and was elected president again in May 2006, serving to May 2010, when he became treasurer again.



LURIE NESSEL (Programs) began birdwatching by observing a Hooded Oriole in the desert of north Scottsdale in 1990, although at the time the bird was an unidentified spark of wonder. A Beginning Birdwatching

class with Herb Fibel, her teacher and mentor, facilitated her new passion. Birdwatching led to botanizing which led to herps and arthropods. All these interests inevitably led her to a con-

servation ethic that she subtly introduces in her beginning dragonfly walks at local recharge facilities. Laurie is an avid digital photographer, capturing the macro world of the Sonoran desert. See some of her favorite images on her website, www.laurienessel.com.



MIKE FOLEY'S (Education) world changed in 1996 with the sighting of a Vermilion Flycatcher at Hassayampa River Preserve. Prior to this sighting Mike enjoyed hiking in Arizona's many exciting trails, but this little

flycatcher sparked the start a major change for Mike's career and life. Three short years later Mike left his position at one of Scottsdale's leading resorts and began working at the Phoenix Zoo where today he manages the Volunteer Management Team and Visitor Experiences in the park. He loves birding and other wildlife watching in Alaska and Pacific Northwest.



MICHAEL PLAGENS (Field Trips) first came to Arizona in 1976 after a stint in the US Army as a Preventative Medicine Specialist. He began studies at the Univ. Arizona and at the same time fell in love

with the Sonoran Desert and the Arizona mountains. A B.S. in Agriculture was awarded in 1979 followed by a M.S. in Entomology in 1981. There he also studied ornithology under Stephen Russel and botany under Charles Mason. On to U. of Florida where he continued his studies in entomology. With a PhD in hand but no job he returned to Arizona in 1985 where he has worked in public health and IT. Ever since then he has devoted his spare time to the study and appreciation of all things nature in Arizona. His web publication, Sonoran Desert Naturalist, draws 1500 visits per day and satisfaction that others can share his passion. He has led numerous field trips for Audubon as well as the Arizona Native Plant Society.



SCOTT BURGE, Scott Burge started birdwatching at Boy Scout camp, Camp Geronimo, in 1968. He has been an active Maricopa Audubon Society member since that date and twice served as

the president. He has three businesses including an environmental consulting firm, research and development laboratory and a brewery, Dave's Electric Brewpub, all located in Tempe.



EMILY MORRIS (Editor, *Cactus Wren-dition*) became interested in birds after she graduated from Vassar College with a degree in Environmental Science and Art History. Since college, she has traveled around

the US and Europe working as a field technician studying plants, insects and birds. She started as editor last spring and began a job as Audubon Arizona's Teacher/Naturalist in October.



LISA FITZNER (Publicity) has a B.S. from Cornell University (Natural Resources/wildlife management) and an M.S. from WSU in Biology. Although she's worked for numerous federal agencies, she

spent most of her career as a District Biologist for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. She has studied a variety of species including Least Terns, Sage Sparrows, Sage Grouse, Harlequin Ducks, and Ferruginous Hawks. In addition to conducting research on fish and wildlife, she was actively involved in managing game populations of elk, deer, waterfowl and upland birds. She also worked extensively on habitat protection and acquisition. Her biggest success was preserving the last free flowing reach of the Columbia River as a National Monument! After she retired she decided to do seasonal migrations between Arizona and Idaho! She's looking forward to seeing everyone this fall.



MARK LARSON (President) See Mark's President's Message on page 3.



ROBIN SILVER (Vice President) is one of the founders of the Center for Biological Diversity. A retired emergency-room physician in Phoenix and a professional wildlife photographer, Robin works on

conservation issues in the Southwest with a focus on the San Pedro River.

Grand Canyon's Green Heart

Gillian Rice

nature drawings

Pressing my nose to the jigsaw puzzle bark of the ponderosa pine, I inhale. Breathe deeply. Again and again. The sweet vanilla scent is just one small contributor to that special fresh aroma of Arizona's north country. The aroma, intoxicating to this city dweller, is produced by the plant life. Celebrating the plant life of Grand Canyon National Park is an exhibit, "Grand Canyon's Green Heart:



Three-hearts
Tricardia watsonii Torrey ex S. Watson
Gigi Wilson, watercolor
Rare in Grand Canyon

colored pencil, using centuries-old traditional methods.

The exhibit teaches about plants from all the Canyon's life zones (riparian, deserts, pinyon-juniper, ponderosa pine, and montane forest). We learn that every day

of the year a flower is blooming somewhere in the Grand

Canyon! Plants transform sunlight into energy and serve as the basis for all animal life on earth. The Canyon's changes in elevation (from 1,200 feet to 9,200 feet), myriad micro-climates, soil types, diverse geology, and sheer size (over 1.2 million acres) converge to

produce an astounding range of plant life.

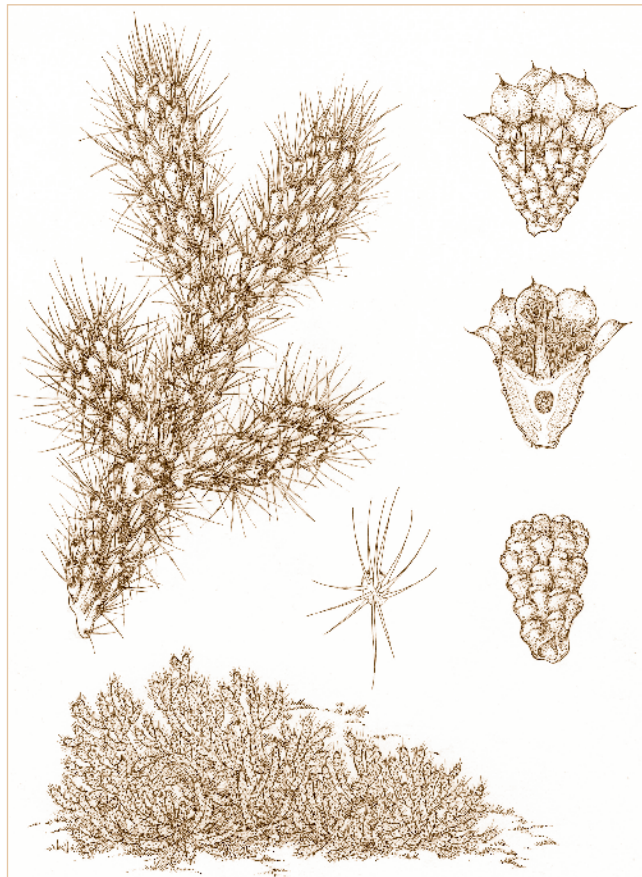
Most of the plants featured in the exhibition are rare or uncommon and, in the future, the illustrations will be included in the revised edition of *A Field Guide to the Special Status Plants of Grand*



Canyon National Park by Nancy J. Brian. "The illustrations will help park biologists distinguish rare plants from other closely related species and then monitor the health of the populations in the park," says Grand Canyon Vegetation Program Manager, Lori Makarick.

In the exhibit is information on the botanists who have ventured into the Canyon, enduring sizzling heat,

freezing cold, steep slopes, severe exposures, almost impenetrable brush, lack of water, and possibility of rattlesnakes, in order to study its flora since the 1800s.



Peach Springs Canyon cholla
Cylindropuntia abyssi (Hester) Backeberg
Elaine Hultgren, pen & ink
Endemic to Grand Canyon

The Unsung Legacy of Plants." I'm up at the South Rim for this free exhibit's opening reception. And I'm particularly excited because my artwork is included in the exhibit!

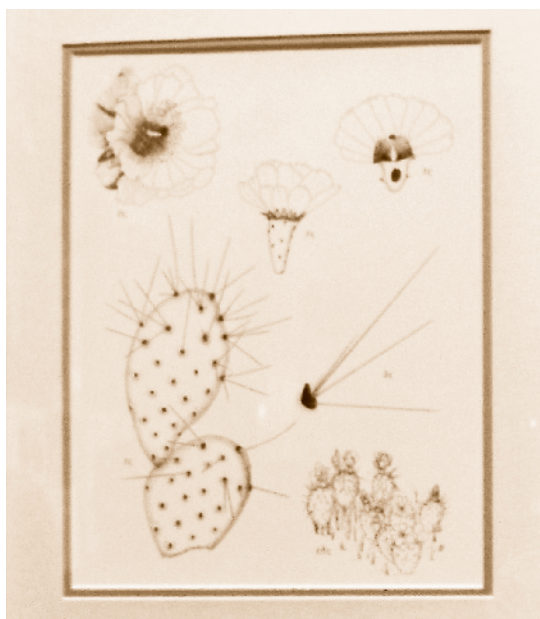
"The purpose of the exhibit is to educate the general public," says Wendy Hodgson, Curator of the Desert Botanical Garden's Herbarium. "When people are educated about plants, they are more likely to protect them." Hodgson has supervised the eighteen volunteer artists who illustrated about 50 plants in pen and ink, watercolor, and

Grand Canyon's Green Heart cont.

Gillian Rice

The exhibit also details how specimens are subsequently recorded by illustrators. Illustrations are preferred to photographs to assist in species identification because specific differentiating details can be shown more carefully. H. Walter Lack, in *Garden of Eden: Masterpieces of Botanical Illustration*, writes: "The purpose of every botanical illustration is to give an exact picture of a plant or of parts of a plant. It is essential to capture the often short-lived and fragile structure of a plant so precisely that the observer is able to identify and recognize the plant."

One of the "illustrator's tools of the trade" displayed is the microscope for dissecting plant parts. Botanical illustration is a blend of art and science. Illustrators study their subjects in detail so they can portray them truthfully. Often,



Pinkava's prickly-pear
Opuntia pinkavae B. Parfitt
Daniela Siroky, pen & ink
Endemic to Colorado Plateau,
newly discovered species

and certainly in earlier centuries before the advent of photography, illustrators worked only from dried

herbarium specimens (pressed plants) and a botanist's field notes.

"Botanical art must have three characteristics," explains Marilyn Garber, Founder of the Minnesota School of Botanical Art, who traveled to the Canyon for the opening of the exhibit. "These are that it must be scientifically accurate, aesthetically pleasing, and demonstrate technical excellence."

Stones of Egyptian tombs at Karnak preserve the earliest known botanical illustrations. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries represent the golden age of botanical art and in the twentieth century it had all but vanished from public view. Current interest in ecology and horticulture has created a revival and a small but committed group of artists carry on an ancient tradition, with the emphasis on documenting and preserving rare plants.

The botanical art exhibit can be seen at the historic Kolb Studio in Grand Canyon Village. It's sponsored by the Grand Canyon Association, the Grand Canyon National Park, and the Desert Botanical Garden, and runs through the end of August.



Large flower wild hollyhock
Iliamna grandiflora (Rydberg) Wiggins
Gabriela Henn, colored pencil
Rare in Grand Canyon, Kaibab Plateau



Cave-dwelling primrose
Primula specuicola Rydberg
Gillian Rice, watercolor
Endemic to Colorado Plateau, rare in Grand Canyon

Audubon Launches National Oil Spill Volunteer Response Center

Facility in Mississippi to mobilize more than 13,000 volunteers

Press Release from June 2010, printed with permission from National Audubon Society.

A new national Volunteer Response Center is gearing up to channel the energies of a growing force of volunteers seeking to help birds, wildlife and habitat to weather the assault of the Gulf oil spill.

The National Audubon Society will use the facility in Moss Point, Mississippi along with organizers deployed to affected areas in four states to contact, coordinate and mobilize more than 13,000 volunteers who signed up with Audubon in the first weeks of the disaster. That number is expected to grow.

"The volunteer response to this growing disaster has been amazing," said Sean Saville, National Field Director for the National Audubon Society. "People just want to do something to help, and with the additional coordinating capacity at our new Volunteer Response Center we can engage volunteers in a positive and timely way and also help set realistic expectations about what volunteer opportunities are available. Volunteers with the right skills and a positive attitude can make a world of difference by being available when and where they're needed."

Early in the crisis Audubon teams responded to urgent requests from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife

Service in Louisiana, recruiting and scheduling scores of volunteers to work dockside shifts to assist federal and state wildlife agencies in their recovery and transport of oiled and injured birds. Though initial needs were lower than expected, the vital staffing goes on. Across the Gulf Coast, volunteers screened for special skills are helping to identify and mark fragile coastal areas to protect habitats and nesting areas from damage as clean-up operations become necessary.

"Things have been pretty hectic since my arrival, but the National Audubon Society has really stepped up to coordinate volunteers for different areas of the State," said Beth Pattinson, an employee of the US Fish & Wildlife-Alaska working out of the

Roseate Spoonbill
Photo by Bill Stripling

Houma, Louisiana Unified Command Center as the Volunteer Coordinator for this area of the spill.

All I have to do is make a request of the folks I work with at Audubon for a location where hands, hearts and skills are needed and Audubon fills that request. Each day, I get to talk to the volunteers as they check in for their area and it makes my day. What a wonderful group of committed, concerned and good-hearted people."

Audubon says most people simply want to help. Though it will take a while to reach out to all registered volunteers by phone, those who are called are reassured upon learning that there will be future opportunities to help, including participation in long-term restoration efforts.

Anticipated volunteer activities include:

- Volunteer Response Center Staff – scheduling volunteers, identifying and coordinating engagement with new projects, logistical support, arranging training, office management, etc.
- Coastal Bird Survey – collecting data and photos on bird resources and impacts across the coast according to specific scientific protocols.
- Wildlife Transport Facilitator – assisting USFWS and Tri-State Bird Rescue with volunteers

Brown Pelican Photo by Bill Stripling

scheduled in round-the-clock shifts in key locations for injured/oiled wildlife recovery and transport operations throughout the coastal region.

- Bird Capture and Rescue Materials – volunteers are needed to make nets, cages and other materials to assist trained professionals in oiled bird rescue efforts.
- Citizen Science Monitoring – submitting electronic information on birds sightings at Important Bird Areas, refuges or sanctuaries to assess population impacts, numbers of

target species or species of concern

- Bird Hotline Operators – providing on-site bird expertise for our Volunteer Response Center as well as possibly in field offices of BP, Tri-State Bird Rescue and others involved in response efforts to address issues related to bird sightings, handling, species identification, etc.

A fixture in the Gulf for decades, Audubon is well known to community leaders, resource management agencies and conservation-minded residents. Its priority efforts to arresting the erosion of coastal land and restore the healthy marshes vital to maintaining storm protection, protecting birds and wildlife, and ensuring the prosperity of coastal communities. From wildlife monitoring to restoration projects and dealing with invasive plants, volunteers will play important roles in the restoring the long-term health of the region.

"Audubon has been working for the health of the Gulf for years. We can help volunteers to make a difference now, when it's needed most, and together we can help the region grow even stronger long after the headlines fade," said Dr. Mark LaSalle, Director of the Pascagoula River Audubon Center in Moss Point.

"The renewed attention about the state of our natural resources will do much to help engage volunteers in meaningful efforts to document their status through Citizen Science programs like the newly launched Audubon Coastal Bird Survey, and then to help restore habitats long impacted by over development."

Audubon's Volunteer Response Center is located at: 6016 Highway 63 in Moss Point. Interested volunteers may register online at www.audubon.org and will be contacted shortly as opportunities arise.

The Response Center facility and operations are made possible in part by a donation from Chevron, a long-time supporter of Audubon conservation education efforts in the region.

For photos of birds affected by the oil spill, and other resources for media, see our Press Room

TO SIGN UP TO VOLUNTEER

Media Contacts:
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What God Giveth, Man and Agencies Taketh

Bob Witzeman

“Hurt not the Earth, neither the seas nor the trees...”

– Revelations 7:3

Arizonans have been blessed with the bounty of wetlands here in our arid Sonoran Desert. U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management lands make up 47% of Arizona. Many contain wetlands treasures. It is up to U.S. citizens to speak on behalf of these areas which commercial interests might destroy, or when their public servant watchdogs fall asleep. Mining and livestock grazing on our central Arizona public lands have been drawing a noose around these wetlands.



Photo A. USFS livestock management of wetlands at Oak Flat Campground:
Before: Cottonwood, willow, oak and luxuriant vegetation surround the wetlands impoundment at Oak Flat USFS campground (Jan. 2008).

Under recent threat is the Haunted Canyon riparian habitat east of Superior, AZ. The strikingly beautiful Eared Quetzal, a visitor from Mexico, was seen there by many during its recorded stay from Jan. 1 through March 14, 1996. It

provided a stunning MAS newsletter cover photo by Jim Burns. 1996 was a “mast crop” year there. Birders there witnessed hundreds of Hermit Thrushes and American Robins eating acorns and fruiting plants in that lush riparian area.

Now a Canadian copper mining company (Cambior/Carlota) located east of Superior is pumping groundwater from beneath Haunted Canyon’s water table. Despite a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process prescribing USFS oversight of in-stream flow mitigation, the company and USFS have failed to mitigate the mine’s groundwater pumping and halt its destruction of its riparian vegetation.

Another cause of wetlands injury to our USFS lands results from USFS-managed private cattle grazing on USFS land. Examples include: (1) the Oak Flat USFS Campground, and (2), the USFS marsh wetland a mile to the west. A treasure-trove of birds, butterflies,



After: This photo documents recent USFS removal of the impoundment’s lush vegetation. One of several cattle present is visible within this barren, devegetated impoundment. Livestock have impaired cottonwood/willow regeneration here (June 2010).

What God Giveth, Man and Agencies Taketh

Bob Witzeman

conservation

dragonflies, damselflies and other wildlife could be found at both wetlands – until recently.

Enclosed is a 1998 photo (photo C) of a Western Pondhawk dragonfly consuming a moth. It was photographed among the lush, tall, reeds and cattails at wetlands ponds located just east of Oak Flat Campground. In past recent weeks (photo D) USFS-permitted cattle have entirely devoured its lush reeds and wetlands vegetation. Participants on a recent MAS field trip led by Dr. Pierre Deviche were horrified to see the destruction (photo D) of this beautiful marsh that had been intact a very few months earlier.

Photo A (Jan. 2008) shows the lush vegetation and prime wildlife habitat (for birds, butterflies, dragonflies, mammals) alongside the Oak Flat USFS campground's wetlands stock tank habitat. Photo B (June 2010) shows the impoundment after USFS mechanical removal of its wetlands vegetation. It also reveals one of the cattle in that devegetated USFS wetland. Likewise, recruitment of willow and cottonwood saplings and seedlings there is being prevented by cattle which devour cottonwood/ willow saplings and seedlings as if they were ice cream. Now only a few senescent cottonwoods remain and willow recruitment there is threatened..

However, many thoughtful USFS managers in the Southwest are displaying courage in keeping keep cattle out of such marshes and wetlands treasures.



Photo C. USFS livestock management of marsh wetlands west of Oak Flat:

Before: Western Pondhawk dragonfly feeds on a moth among tall, dense, marsh/reed vegetation at the USFS wetlands west of Oak Flat (Sept. 2008).

Pessimists might say all is lost because Oak Flat is being proposed for obliteration by the Resolution Copper Company's (RCC) proposed congressional land-swap. RCC would create here a cavernous hole a mile in diameter and hundreds of feet deep. Fortunately, there are environmentally and culturally aware

Congressional chairpersons like Raul Grijalva of Tucson who oppose RCC's legislative end-run around the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

NEPA is our nation's environmental and cultural Bill of Rights. This 1969 federal law requires oversight of projects having a federal nexus. It is a law which prevents harms to irreplaceable Native American cultural and historical values, endangered species, and treasured Sonoran Desert streams and wetlands.

NEPA short-cut legislation is being championed by Senators McCain and even Arizona Democratic Representatives Kirkpatrick and Mitchell. Since RCC is a consortium of the world's two largest mining companies, buying one's way through congresspersons and even respected conservation groups would come as no surprise. Best Democrat was Carter, then Clinton, and Obama, thus far, last.



After: USFS-approved cattle grazing here has recently obliterated the pond's entire marsh/ reed wetlands vegetation. A shoreline of hoof and mud-battered stubble, not inches high, remains (June 2010). Photos by Bob Witzeman.

Science Corner

Guest Columnist: Scott Davies

Swift swifts

If it's not incredible enough for you that swifts mate while flying, then maybe it will amaze you to hear that while they are in these "screaming parties" they reach the fastest speed of any bird in level flight.

When it comes to speed, it is widely acknowledged that the Peregrine Falcon, *Falco peregrinus*, is the fastest of all animals. While hunting for prey, Peregrines dive into a 'stoop' and harness the power of gravity to reach speeds of up to 186 mph! In level, self-powered flight, however, the Peregrine is no longer out in front. This title has to go to the Common Swift, *Apus apus*, a species found throughout Europe. Scientists in Sweden recorded the Swift as being able to propel itself up to speeds of 69.3 mph, the highest confirmed speed of a bird in level flight.



Bar-tailed Godwit

Even more surprising is the circumstances in which Swifts reach these high speeds. Usually, Common Swifts fly at a relatively constant speed of 22 to 26 mph. But when

swifts gather to mate they perform social displays called screaming parties, named after the calls emitted by the birds, and more than double their normal flight speed.

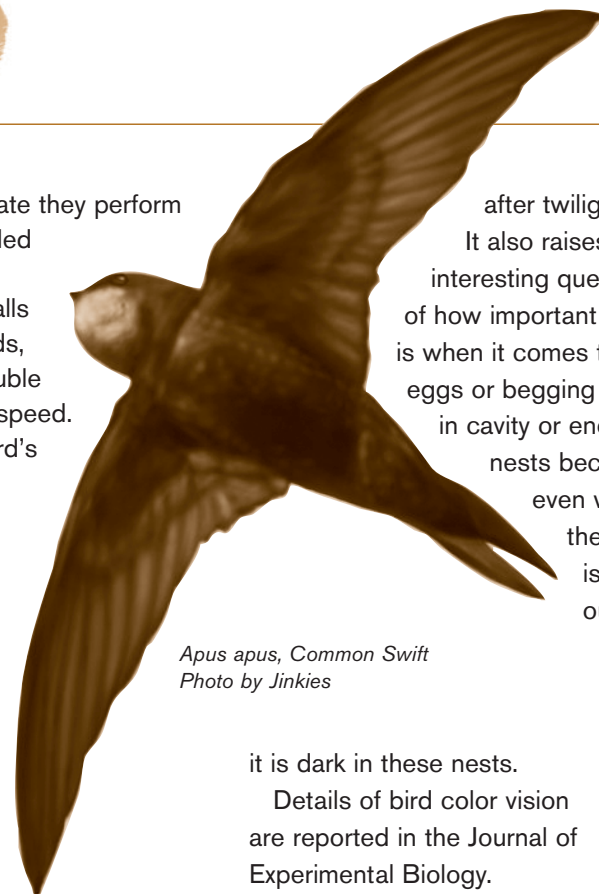
Details of the bird's high speeds are reported in the Journal of Avian Biology.

At twilight, birds switch from HD vision to black and white

Birds have highly developed color vision that vastly surpasses that of humans. Indeed, birds can see more colors than us and can even see ultraviolet light. But, scientists in Sweden have

shown that this enhanced vision comes at a cost: to see colors, birds need 5 to 20 times as much light as humans. For us humans, when the light intensity decreases at dusk, we lose color vision. Birds, on the other hand, lose color vision much earlier – roughly that of twilight.

This finding raises questions about how the use of color signals, such as feather coloration, and the social interactions associated with color signals, change during and



Apus apus, Common Swift
Photo by Jinkies

after twilight. It also raises an interesting question of how important color is when it comes to eggs or begging chicks in cavity or enclosed nests because, even when the sun is bright outside,

it is dark in these nests.

Details of bird color vision are reported in the Journal of Experimental Biology.

Who is the real Master of Migration?

When it comes to long distance migrants, the Arctic Tern, *Sterna paradisaea*, receives all of the accolades. Indeed, it's 25,000 mile round-trip migration is the longest of any bird. However, the Arctic Tern breaks this mammoth journey up into lots of shorts flights. The Bar-tailed Godwit, *Limosa lapponica*, on the other hand, doesn't have the luxury of breaking its journey up into shorter flights; the Godwit's migration takes it from Alaska to New Zealand – a course that takes it directly over the Pacific Ocean. This means that the Godwit flies for over 6,800 miles in one go. Put another way, the Godwit flies constantly for 9 1/2 days without stopping to rest, feed, or even sleep! Maybe the Bar-tailed Godwit's ultra-endurance feat deserve some of the Tern's accolades?

Details of the Godwit's migration are reported in the journal PLoS Biology.

Naturalist Hot Spots: An Introduction

Matt VanWallene

A few birding sites for you to consider.

From a few hours away to right here in the valley, there are some great places to bird in and around the Valley of the Sun. With water at each of these locations, butterflies, frogs, turtles, and squirrels add to your birding fun.

Woodland Reservoir, Lakeside, AZ

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland Reservoir %28Arizona%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woodland_Reservoir_%28Arizona%29)

I found out about this lake from a librarian in the Show Low library. It is a beautiful man-made lake with great snags that attract all kinds of birds. The easy walkway around the lake leaves enough shoreline for bird habitat and easy viewing. At an elevation of 7,200 feet, it is a much different environment than the desert of Phoenix. My favorite bird was the Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson

(take the El Camino Del Cerro exit, travel south on the access road then west on W Sweetwater Dr, it will be on the south side of the street)

<http://www.ci.tucson.az.us/water/sweetwater.htm>

Did you know that there is a great birding site just a five minute drive off of I-10 in Tucson? It is a water treatment facility run by the city. The water treated there is used for golf courses, schools and parks. The facility has a lot of shade, heavy growth on the pond edges and great walkways. There are patios built out into the ponds for easy viewing of water fowl. The environment's tall trees help to attract a diverse list of species.

The website provides a map to the location and a great activity book that

not only has a bird list but covers the reptiles, mammals, insects, and

Rivers. Just southwest of downtown Phoenix puts this site within range



Spotted Skimmer.

plants. Check out the e-bird website on what birds are prevalent for the time that you are going. You are pretty much guaranteed fifty species on any given day.

Hassayampa River Preserve, Wickenburg

<http://gosw.about.com/od/bestsightstosee/a/hassayampa.htm>

Southeast of Wickenburg, this preserve is a great desert river bottom. A walk into the park starts with a few hummingbird feeders and gets better from there. There are lots of ponds, easy paths, and lots of shade. The cottonwood-willow forest is only found near desert waterways. My favorite bird there was the Zone-tailed Hawk.

Tres Rios Wetlands, Phoenix

<http://phoenix.gov/TRESRIOS/faq.html>

Tres Rios is at the confluence of the Salt, Gila, and Aqua Fria

of everyone in the valley. It has great desert water habitat and excellent pathways. My favorite bird there was the Townsend's Solitaire. When you are done birding there just a little further west is Phoenix International Raceway. Cliff Swallows live under the bridge, and the northeast parking lot makes the river bottom accessible.

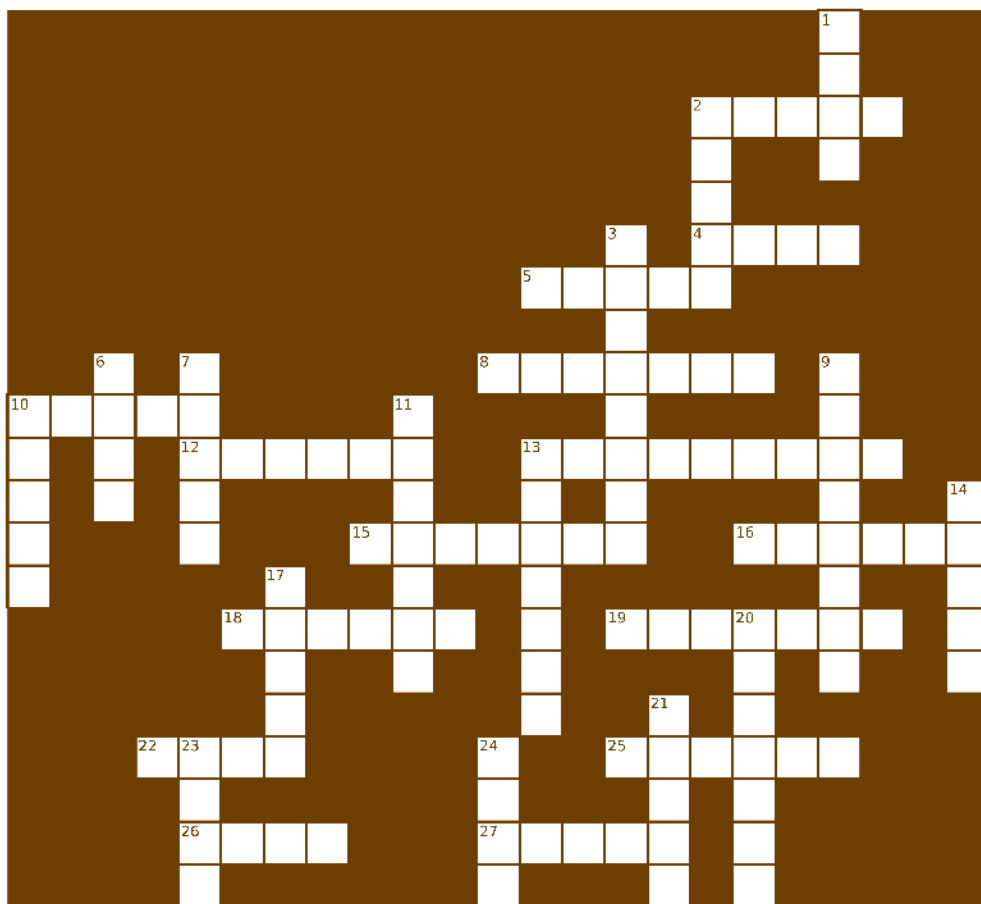
Gilbert Water Ranch, Gilbert

<http://www.riparianinstitute.org/about.cfm>

My favorite valley birding site has bathroom facilities, benches, shade, great walkways, seven ponds, a lake, and a hummingbird and butterfly garden. I have had countless photo opportunities there and even the dog days of summer provide Black-necked Stilt chicks. Beginning birders will easily see 30 species on their first visit. My favorite bird there is the Peach-faced Lovebird.

Oil Spill Drama

Karen Feltz



Across

- 2 A large floating area of oil
- 4 Structures to support off-shore drilling
- 5 Name of oil before it is processed
- 8 _____ efforts in the Gulf that include Audubon volunteers
- 10 The _____ game
- 12 State where Exxon Valdez spill happened
- 13 Pink bird also possibly affected by spill
- 15 State with second-longest coastline
- 16 Some residents of the Gulf area are reporting these kinds of effects
- 18 What the B in BP stands for
- 19 Actor Kevin who designed a plan to stop the flow of oil
- 22 Turtle _____ are being relocated
- 25 Ship used to transport oil
- 26 _____ current that connects the Gulf of Mexico to the Florida Straits
- 27 BP disaster is already considered the largest US oil _____

Down

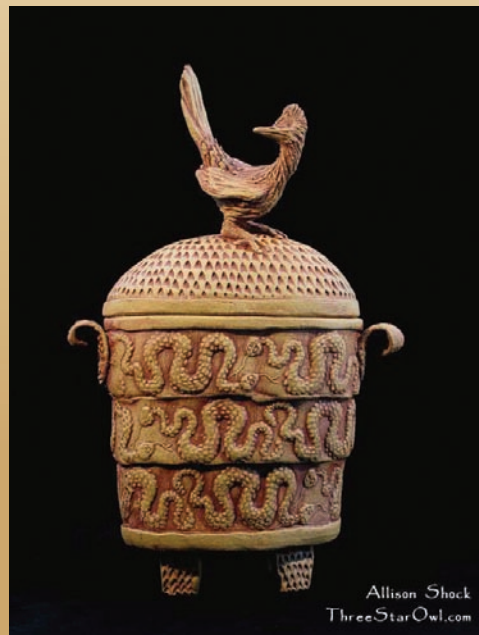
- 1 An affiliate of BP
- 2 Off- _____ drilling
- 3 Famous river that caught on fire
- 6 Not allowed to do this very much along the Gulf Coast at the moment
- 7 Holiday hot spot, some of which have closed down thanks to the spill
- 9 Pelican that have been cleaned are then _____ in hopes they'll moved away from the spill
- 10 _____ Pelicans, iconic bird threatened by oil spill
- 11 As of July 6, 2010: 90.1 million _____ of oil had leaked
- 13 Ship that removes surface oil
- 14 Amount in billions of gallons of oil the world uses every day
- 17 Oil _____ that pumps oil out of the ground
- 20 Failed plan using a mud plug designed to stop the oil spill (2 words)
- 21 Tar _____, what had started to show up on the Texas coast in early July
- 23 _____ of Mexico
- 24 Company donating supplies to help clean the birds

Answers

10 Blame	19 Costner	22 Nests	27 Spill	7 Beach	17 Wells
8 Cleanup	18 Beyond	26 Loop	25 Tanker	6 Fish	14 Three
5 Crude	16 Health	24 Dawn	23 Gulf	3 Cuyahoga	13 Skimmer
4 Rigs	15 Florida	21 Balls	20 Top Kill	2 Shore	11 Gallons
2 Stick	13 Spoonbill	25 Brown	9 Relocated	1 ARCO	10 Brown
Across	12 Alaska	26 Relocated		Down	

Nature through the Artist's Eye: Allison Shock

Three Star Owl offers the distinctive clay work of artist Allison Shock. Each piece is made by hand, using the ancient and low-tech methods of coiling, pinching, modeling, and building with slabs of clay. Surfaces are often highly textured with self-made stamps, and decorated with slips and glazes appropriate for their intended use, functional or sculptural. From species-identifiable portraits of native fauna, to detailed dioramas of predator-prey interaction perched on boxes and jars, Three Star Owl clay displays a light-hearted yet mildly macabre view of the natural world. Please visit threestarowl.com for more information.



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miscellaneous

Monthly Meeting

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall or Webster Auditorium, at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), except for our annual banquet in May, the location to be announced. The DBG is located at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona. This is approximately 1/4 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. For a map, please see the DBG website at www.dbg.org/.

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG. Webster is in the far southeast side of the gardens. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopa-audubon.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 Scott Burge, 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+. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Scott Burge, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the *Cactus Wren*dition* is to become a "Friend".) For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail Scott Burge.

Submissions

Copy for *The Cactus Wren*dition* must be received by the editor by e-mail, 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: The Cactus Wren*dition Editor, Emily Morris: monarchmorris@gmail.com

Opinions

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

Reprinting of material

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

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