



# The Cactus Wren·dition

Volume LXII, No. 3

Fall 2011



**Gila Woodpeckers**

*Photo by Matt VanWallene*



# Programs 2011

**September 6, 2011**

**Bob Witzeman**  
**Peru**

Manú Road, Amazonia Lodge, Manú National Park and Manú Wildlife Center Rio Manú oxbow lakes. Canopy birding from towers. Famous macaw clay lick. Virgin rainforest. There is no place in South America that compares to Manú! Located southeast of Cusco, the immense park covers elevations from high páramo in the Andes to an amazing expanse of lowland Amazonian rainforest. The bird list for the park exceeds

1000 species, and it is one of the few wild places left on Earth that have huge areas undeveloped and even unexplored, with indigenous people living within the park that have never had any contact with the outside world! Despite the seeming remoteness of Manú, it is actually quite accessible by way of the Manú Road, that traverses from Cusco to the Amazonian Lowlands, and then along the Madre de Dios River to the Manú River. Some of the species in this presentation include Scarlet

Macaw, Sunbittern, Curl-crested Araçari, Pied Lapwing, Scarlet-bell, Spotted Tanager, Sungrebe, Versicolored Barbet, Paradise Tanager, Scarlet-bellied Mountain Tanager, Fork-tailed Woodnymph, Sapphire-

Hoatzin

Photo by B. Witzeman



## Committees/Support

### Arizona Audubon Council Rep

Emerson Stiles  
[estiles2@hotmail.com](mailto:estiles2@hotmail.com)

### Bookstore

Mel Bramley  
480 969-9893

### Hospitality

David Chorlton  
602-253-5055

### Web Page

Michelle Peppers  
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### Maricopa Audubon Website

<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>

### Maricopa Audubon Phone

480-829-8209

**"For man, as for flower and beast and bird, the supreme triumph is to be most vividly, most perfectly alive."**  
- D. H. Lawrence

## 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.

spangled Emerald, Blue-headed Parrots and Golden-tailed.

**Webster Auditorium**



Paradise Tanager

Photo by B. Witzeman

**October 4, 2011**

**David Mackay**

**Where the Sonoran Desert meets the Tropics: Birdlife and Natural History of Sonora, Mexico**

From Sonoran Desert habitat to the Sierra Madre Occidental, the shores of the Sea of Cortez and the fantastic diversity of the Tropical Deciduous Forest, Arizona's southern neighbor has more than 400 species of birds (including a number of wonderful northwest Mexican endemics) as well as a dizzying array of plants, butterflies, insects and animals. With an emphasis on the rich birdlife of their adopted home state, David and Jennifer MacKay of Solipaso Tours and El Pedregal



Many colorful birds fill the canopies.

Photo by B. Witzeman

Nature Lodge in Alamos, Sonora will share colorful anecdotes and images from their 17 years of living in Sonora. It is difficult to explore the natural wonders of Mexico without touching on the human history and traditions of Mexico and its people. In this fascinating presentation the MacKays will explore the warm culture and abundant nature of Sonora.

David and Jennifer moved to Alamos with their two young daughters in 1994 seeking a life change and new opportunities. The magic of Alamos took hold of them and they began to create a life there. In their time in Alamos, they have renovated two historic buildings and created two bed and breakfasts and a restaurant. In 1998 they launched Solipaso Tours, and have been offering bird watching tours to numerous locations throughout Mexico. In 2005 they purchased 20 acres and began construction of their dream location, El Pedregal Nature Lodge and Retreat Center, which is now their base of operation.

**Webster Auditorium**

**November 1, 2011**

**David and Diane Reesor**

**Botswana and the Okovango Delta**

This program is sure to please with images from seasoned travel photographers David and Diane Reesor. See Cape Hunting Dogs with newborn pups, Malacite and Giant Kingfisher, Southern Carmine Bee Eater, Pink-backed Pelican, Coppery-tailed Coucal, Nubian Woodpecker, Crested Barbet, Swamp Boubou, African Barred Owllet, Taita Fiscal Shrike, Sable, Red Lechwe and Tsesebe.

**Dorrance Hall**

**December 6, 2011**

**Larry Morgan**

**Dauphin Island**

**Webster Auditorium**

**On the cover:** Gila Woodpeckers by Matt VanWallene  
Nikon D90, 70mm-300mm lens at 80mm, f/7.1, 1/160, flash.



# President's Message

Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

**T**he year's hottest weather is upon us as I write this in early July. Temperatures are forecast to reach 118°F in Phoenix this weekend, close to a record. And the drought continues. But our hottest and driest weather is always followed by the summer

rainy season which can breathe new life into the deserts, mountains, and grasslands of the state. Indeed, late summer in Arizona has been called our "second spring."

This summer, however, the rains may bring another,

more critical benefit: extinguishing the many wildfires that have plagued the state. Some of our favorite birding locations have been blackened and others have been closed in hopes of preventing more fires.

One of the reasons that these fires have been so widespread and devastating is that forest management policy in the Southwest has disregarded natural forest ecology for so many decades. Large-scale fire suppression for so many years in forests that *require small fires to stay healthy* has produced conditions that are ideal for destruction of unprecedented magnitude. New, ecologically sound forest management policies are needed while protecting critical habitats for endangered species.

With fall, we look forward to resuming our informative monthly meetings at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. Should any of you wish to attend a meeting but lack transportation, please notify me or another Board Member so we can arrange transport for you. I look forward to seeing you there! 🐦

## From The Editor

Emily Morris

**D**uring the past few months I have felt extremely encouraged about the fate of children in the Phoenix area; this uplifting feeling has been due largely to the enthusiasm and dedication of teachers and environmental education volunteers with whom I have had the pleasure to work.



Brothers Luis and Miguel birding along the Rio Salado

With so many politicians and naysayers belittling the work and competencies of America's school system, it may be easy to get sucked down into despair, but it has been the opposite for me. I am currently finishing up five weeks of Camp Audubon Adventures summer

camps at the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center. With the help of some truly amazing local teachers, we filled all five weeks with local kids, many of whom have never had the opportunity to spend significant amounts of time outdoors. Without these teachers, it would have been extremely difficult to spread the word about the opportunities at the Center.

Audubon volunteers have been the fuel behind the success of the camps. It is the Audubon name that attracted some young and promising future leaders in the field of conservation to the camps in the form of interns. Without the support from chapter and Center volunteers, the camps would not have been nearly as fun and successful (for the campers as well as for me).

I am continually buoyed up by the positive attitude and fun spirit of Audubon members. I am so glad to be part of a family that can do so much good! 🐦



Audubon volunteer, Scott Davies, demonstrates mist-netting to campers; with his skill and experience, he was able to show the kids a male Song Sparrow.



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

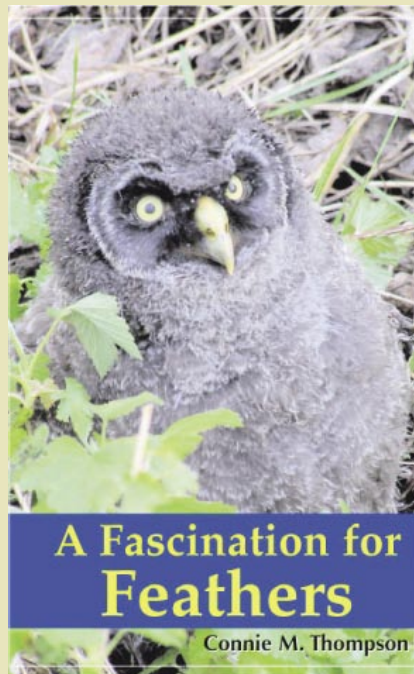
## Birding Community E-Bulletin

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](mailto:wpetersen@massaudubon.org) or Paul Baich at 410-992-9736 or [paul.baich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baich@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](http://www.casacaballoblanco.com).



## A Fascination With Feathers

by Connie M. Thompson. Watching birds is a consuming hobby, one that has put intrigue and adventure into my life in more ways than I would have imagined. Writing a book is the perfect culmination of that hobby. I have had so many interesting and intriguing things happen to me over the years with my feathered friends that I simply could NOT let the stories about those birds fade away into the sunset. I have spent this past year compiling bird tales of my own, along with all of my friends that I have corresponded with over the years. Often it is their stories that are the most compelling, and I feel that they would want these stories retold so that others could share in their joy, wonder, and amazement like

I have. I hope that you will enjoy these stories as much as I have taken pleasure in retelling them. It is my hope that you too will remember some interesting stories and share them with me on my future journey through this life.

## 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](mailto:kernnature@aol.com). (N.B. The Kern brothers project is independent from Audubon.)



## Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival Incorporating the Sky Islands Birding Cup

August 17-21, 2011 at The Riverpark Inn, near downtown Tucson, AZ

Tucson Audubon and the Riverpark Inn invite you to join the fun at the Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival, August 17-21. This event celebrates the unique biodiversity of southeast Arizona with exciting educational opportunities for birders and nature enthusiasts to discover and enjoy the Sonoran Desert and Sky Islands.

Hop in the van with renowned expert leaders and set out on a variety of field trips! From Sweetwater to the Huachuclas and many other favorite birding sites in between, we'll track down those fabulous southeast Arizona specialties and more! Stop by the Nature Expo to peruse a unique collection of nature-oriented vendors, and explore interactive exhibits – bring the whole family to get up close and personal with live birds and other critters, and learn about our fascinating flora and fauna! After a great day's birding, convene at the Riverpark Inn for friendly social hours and illuminating evening programs.

Don't miss the inaugural Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival. Registration and more details online at [www.tucsonaudubon.org/festival](http://www.tucsonaudubon.org/festival)

## THIS EXCITING EVENT FEATURES:

- The **Sky Islands Birding Cup** (a "Big Day" competition like no other) on Aug. 17. Full details online [www.tucsonaudubon.org/cup](http://www.tucsonaudubon.org/cup)
- Evening programs by renowned naturalists and educators **Kenn Kaufman** and **Rick Taylor**
- Exciting **monsoon birding**: peak numbers and diversity of bird species!
- **Expert-led field trips** to Southeast AZ birding hotspots like Madera Canyon, Cienega Creek, Mt. Lemmon, Patagonia, Sweetwater Wetlands, and more
- Birding & natural history **workshops and free talks** for beginners through advanced!
- Family-friendly activities & **youth birders' field trip** with Kenn & Kim Kaufman on Saturday, Aug 20
- **Nature Expo** with educational exhibits, vendors, and live critters, plus a great series of FREE natural history talks!
- **Special Festival rates** at The Riverpark Inn and Enterprise Rent-a-car

## Chapter discount on bird-friendly chocolate - what's not to love?

Audubon and Theo are pleased to announce the launch of their first co-branded chocolate bar.



Theo Chocolate is the first organic and fair trade certified bean-to-bar chocolate maker in the United States. Theo produces "origin" chocolates, which are identified by the cacao's growing region. Costa Rica was selected as the country of origin for Audubon chocolate because sustainable farming there protects Neotropical migratory bird habitat. Audubon's Licensing Department worked with our International Alliances Program in approving the farms from which our products are sourced. Theo proudly supports the mission of the National Audubon Society and its diligent work to conserve and restore natural ecosystems that benefit birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

Audubon's 91% cacao bar is a super dark and slightly bitter chocolate that appeals to the "serious chocolate aficionado". Additional products are in development for more mainstream chocolate lovers.

## 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 Laine Seton 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).

## 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 be happy to take your call.

## Shade-grown Coffee

If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit [www.toucanetcoffee.com](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. And another from Kenn Kaufman is [www.birdsandbeans.com](http://www.birdsandbeans.com)

## More Birding and Nature Festivals

[www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org), and [www.birdinghotspot.com](http://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.



# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Mike Plagens

SEP - NOV 2011

**CAR POOLING:** Please make every effort to organize your own carpool; consolidate vehicles at meeting places and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. We recommend 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 we 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/)

## Sept 10th, Oct 16th, Nov 20th

**Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Dragonflies and Butterflies.** The urban wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are quickly becoming a haven for birds and insects. We will see which beautiful and fascinating butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies have found the park's 113 acres of Sonoran Desert and wetlands habitat. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. The walks are not fast-paced, and the terrain is easy. Reservations not required. \$5 suggested donation to support the Environmental Education Center. *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. Meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Red-tailed Hawk Ramada just east of the Environmental Education Center. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. Done by 9:30 a.m..  
**Leader: Laurie Nessel** at (480) 968-5614 or [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

## Saturday, Sept. 17th

**Rio Salado.** Meet at 7:00 a.m. at the parking lot overlook on the northeast corner of the Central Ave. bridge over the Salt River. We'll bird this area's ponds, "waterfall," and riverbank, then proceed west along the river to 7th Ave. and possibly beyond. The entire area can offer nice fall warblers, ducks, waders, and raptors, as well as butterflies. Difficulty: 1-2: Easy with a couple of gradual slopes. Closed toed shoes recommended, water and sun protection. No reservations.

**Leader: Myron Scott** at (480) 968-2179 or [gaia\\_3@netzero.net](mailto:gaia_3@netzero.net)

## Friday, Sept. 23rd–Sunday, Sept. 25th

**Pelagic Excursion to Fourteen Mile Bank, California.** This trip was booked full soon after it was announced at the general monthly meeting in February. Notice of the trip was also sent via e-mail. If you did not get notice, send your e-mail address to the leader for possible future trip announcements.

**Leader: Michael Plagens**  
[mjplagens@arizonensis.org](mailto:mjplagens@arizonensis.org)

## Sunday, Sept. 25th

**Tempe Lake and Marsh.** Meet at 7:00 a.m. behind (north of) the Harkins Theatre at Tempe Marketplace. We'll search the Salt River bottom cottonwoods and willows for fall warblers, and walk to the McClintock bridge, where phalaropes and even a Common Eurasian Teal have appeared in recent years. Then we'll drive across the river (impromptu car pooling encouraged) to the north bank to scope for possible grebes and others, check out Lopiano Wetlands, and cross back south of the river to check out the west dam. If anyone wishes and time allows, we'll end by checking some of the ASU-George Ditch area for passerines. Difficulty 1: Easy and barrier free. Bring water, sun protection and a scope if you have one. No reservations.

**Leader: Myron Scott** at (480) 968-2179 or [gaia\\_3@netzero.net](mailto:gaia_3@netzero.net)

## Monday, October 24th

**Salt River.** October can be an iffy month for birds, so many summer breeders having left, so few wintering birds having arrived. But I've never had a bad day at the Salt River—where we could still catch a few late migrants, plus reliable desert species, waterfowl and usually a bald eagle. Start about 6:45 a.m.. Finish up about 11 a.m.. If more than 8 folks want to participate, I'll try to get a second leader.

**Leader: Kathe Anderson** Limit 8 participants and must register with Kathe: [Kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:Kathe.coot@cox.net)

## Wednesday, October 12th

**Mineral Mountains and Box Canyon:** This beautiful location near Florence, Arizona has an amazing variety of flora and fauna in part because the rugged rock formations are permeable to rain

water that is then released slowly. Birds will be mostly typical desert species so we will make a couple of stops along the Gila River for more. Main focus will be plant and insect life which should be abundant if the monsoon was generous. Meet 5:00 a.m. for carpooling. It will still be hot so bring plenty of water, sun protection, sturdy shoes and a light snack. Finish by 1:00 p.m.. Reservations required. Difficulty 2

**Leader: Mike Plagens**

[mjplagens@arizonensis.org](mailto:mjplagens@arizonensis.org) or  
602-459-5224

### Wednesday, November 9th

#### Afternoon at Tempe Lake and Marsh.

Meet at 3:00 p.m. at Tempe Town Lake then meander over to the marsh area at the Market Place. Finally, as dark approaches, we will wet our whistles at Dave's Electric Brew Pub.

**Leader: Mike Plagens**

[mjplagens@arizonensis.org](mailto:mjplagens@arizonensis.org) or  
602-459-5224

### Saturday, November 12th

#### REACH 11 Recreation Area, Phoenix.

Nice blend of desert, bosque and riparian habitats along the CAP canal. Meet 7:00 a.m. at trailhead parking lot on northeast corner of Tatum and the CAP canal (between Bell Road and Mayo Blvd. and across Tatum from Horse Lovers Park). Difficulty 1. No reservations.

**Leader: Myron Scott** at

(480) 968-2179 or [gaia3@netzero.net](mailto:gaia3@netzero.net)

### Monday, November 14th

**Roosevelt Lake.** We'll start from Gilbert about 6:15ish, wind our way up the Apache Trail, pulling off at viewpoints and promising spots before birding a few of the sites along the shoreline of the lake. Expect a variety of desert dwellers, raptors, possibly terns, Western Grebes and other waterfowl, plus spectacular scenery. We'll circle through Globe on the way back. Finish up about 3:30 p.m.. If more than 8 folks want to participate, I'll try to get a second leader. Please register.

**Leader: Kathe Anderson** Limit 8

participants and must register with Kathe:  
[Kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:Kathe.coot@cox.net)

### Sunday, November 20th

**Gilbert Water Ranch:** a water treatment

facility that attracts wintering water-fowl, shorebirds and resident and wintering passerines. Limit 10. Reservations required. Difficulty 1

**Leader: Cindy West** (info & reservations w/Mike, [mjplagens@arizonensis.org](mailto:mjplagens@arizonensis.org) (602-459-5224).

### Friday, November 25

#### Picket Post Trail to Devil's Canyon.

Meet at 7:30 a.m. at Picketpost Trailhead off US 60 approximately 2 miles west of Boyce Thompson. Call leader for more specific directions and carpooling. This area of riparian, bosque and desert habitat suffered wildfire damage last spring and will afford an opportunity to see how natural succession is progressing. We'll walk the trail behind Boyce and fill out the day with an optional choice of other Queen Creek/Boyce area birding spots such as Oak Flat, Apache Tears and the Devil's Canyon trailhead. Or participants can visit Boyce in the afternoon. Bring water, optional lunch (Superior does have one good Mexican restaurant), Closed-toe shoes. No reservations... Difficulty 1 to 2.

**Leader: Myron Scott** at

(480) 968-2179 or [gaia3@netzero.net](mailto:gaia3@netzero.net)

## FIELD TRIP REPORTS

### Tuesday, June 21st, 2011 by Michael Plagens

Fifteen Audubon members convened on the evening of the summer solstice at a



*An American Kestrel eating a male house sparrow. Photo by Mike Plagens*

busy intersection in central Phoenix. It was just minutes before sunset and the temperature was in excess of 100° F; passersby were certainly wondering what all these crazy people were up to. We

strolled from there about a half mile along the dirt roadway adjacent to the Arizona Canal up to a flood diversion tunnel.

There we waited as the fiery globe of the sun was slipping below the western horizon. Dozens of Lesser Nighthawks were flying overhead and swooping down to catch insects. Many of the insects were mayflies that had just emerged from their aquatic world in the canal. A large sign placed by Arizona Game & Fish told us we had arrived at the location of a maternal nesting colony of Mexican free-tailed bats. Soon we saw the first of the bats zip out of the tunnel only to make an abrupt U-turn back into the dark tunnel.

Across the canal and at the top of a tall, high-tension pole we spotted an American Kestrel perched and waiting. After several moments we saw the kestrel leave its perch and descend at top speed toward the bat-tunnel. It was low to the ground when it cleared the lip of the tunnel wall and moving very fast. Two nighthawks deemed it best to intervene and charged at the approaching falcon and disrupted its aims. Again the kestrel returned to the top of its pole and waited for a second attempt. Repeating the same strategy the kestrel was again accosted by nighthawks and so returned once again to its high perch without prey.

Finally on the third try the kestrel succeeded in nabbing a small bat and returned this time to feed. Just as dusk is setting in is the most productive hunting time for insectivorous bats; but if they emerge too soon, when the light is sufficient for hunting falcons, they risk death.

It was hard for us to estimate the number of bats that finally came out to hunt. By the time the greatest number were moving out, it was too dark to clearly see them. Also, many were looping in and out so there may have been between 500 and 2000. Lower numbers than what some of the hikers anticipated. Maybe the bats were finding another way out to avoid a kestrel encounter?

Without echo-location we navigated our return path to our parked cars and many of us gathered for refreshing ice cream. We later returned to our homes and slept soundly as the bats carried on their night time activities. 🦉



# Plant-Hummingbird Relationships in Arizona

Article and Illustrations by Gillian Rice

Most of us are enchanted by hummingbirds. Flower-visiting of some kind, perhaps to find insects in the flowers, is reported in 50 families of birds. Only three families are flower-specialists; one of these is Trochilidae – hummingbirds. They captivate us as they visit flowers by hovering with no need for a perch.

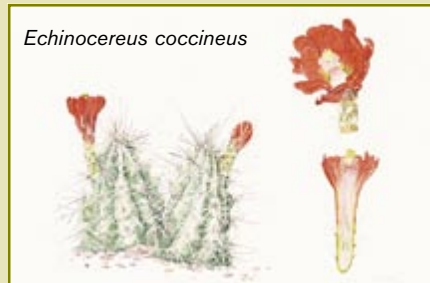
What do we know about their relationships with Arizona's native plants?

Learning more about such relationships is essential. According to Gary Nabhan, protecting the dynamic interactions between plants and pollinators is a crucial conservation issue.

## How do plants attract hummingbirds?

A pollinator syndrome is an interacting set of plant and animal attributes that form a consistent pattern. Flowers in the ornithophilous (bird) pollinator syndrome attract hummingbirds with diurnal anthesis (flowering period) and copious, dilute nectar with mean sugar

*Echinocereus coccineus*



concentrations ranging from 20-26%, with extremes of 10-34%.

Unusually, *Echinocereus coccineus* (claret cup cactus) flowers fit the head rather than just the bill of the hummingbird. Experiments by Steven Lima show that hummingbirds prefer not to visit flowers at ground level and also prefer not to enter large flowers, possibly because of predation risk. A flower must therefore provide a valuable reward for the hummingbird: 30 mg of sugar production per day, at a concentration of 29%. Typical hummingbird flowers in the southwestern U.S. produce only 1-4 mg of sugar per flower per day.

## How do plants protect themselves from damage by birds' bills?

In *Fouquieria splendens* (ocotillo), the upper part of each filament (upon which the stamen rests) is straight and cylindrical, but the lower part is squarish and extends in a spur. This creates a protective chamber above the ovary. Tiny hairs called trichomes extend from the outer sides of the filaments to the inner sides at the upper arches of the spurs. The trichomes become covered with nectar drawn up between the filaments from the ovary base by capillary action. The separation of the ovary and the nectar thus provides protection to the ovary from damage by the bills of feeding hummingbirds.

The flower of *Echinocereus coccineus* (claret cup cactus) has a dense barrier of filaments that protects the ovary.

In *Justicia californica* (chuparosa), the style (the narrowed portion of the female reproductive organ that joins the ovary to the pollen-receptive stigma at the top) is protected in a groove formed from the ridges of the upper petals.

## How do plants deter insects?

Contrary to popular belief, red is not necessary to attract hummingbirds. Researchers have hypothesized that red flowers are a mechanism to deter bees, which cannot see red. There are other insect exclusion mechanisms such as a long, floral tube with no landing platform. For example, *Justicia californica* (chuparosa) has reflexed lower corolla lobes that prevent insects from alighting. The small, pendulant, nodding flowers with somewhat reflexed petals of *Penstemon parryi* (Parry's penstemon) probably perform a similar function.

## Can nectar-robbers promote plant health?

A carpenter bee robs the nectar of *Chilopsis linearis* (desert willow) by piercing the flower at its base from outside. The bee does not touch the anthers (the pollen-bearing portion of

the stamens) and does not transport pollen between flowers. Researchers Joan Maloof and David Inouye found that empty flower nectaries mean hummingbirds fly in search of full ones on other trees. As a hummingbird feeds on nectar, it transfers pollen from one flower to another. Inside a flower, a two-lobed stigma perches on the narrow style. *Chilopsis linearis* pollen from one tree

deposited on an open, receptive stigma of another tree's flower causes the stigma to close. Pollen travels down the style to the ovary to fertilize an ovule, which becomes a fruit with seeds.

Sarah Richardson's experiments show *Chilopsis linearis* pollen must be transferred among trees for reproductive success. If hummingbirds found plenty

*Fouquieria splendens*



*Justicia californica*



of nectar on one tree, they would save energy, not fly elsewhere, and not transfer pollen to other trees.

The carpenter bee's behavior encourages hummingbirds to fly to other trees for nectar and transfer pollen. Surprisingly, both legitimate pollinators and nectar-robbing carpenter bees improve the health of *Chilopsis linearis* (desert willow) populations.

## Do hummingbirds rob nectar?

At the Desert Botanical Garden, I have observed multitudes of bees as well as lone Black-chinned Hummingbirds visiting the flowers of *Agave chrysantha*. Researchers believe that this plant might have been influenced by bat pollination; it exhibits nocturnal nectar production, and a floral odor – typical of bat pollination syndrome. This species is successful beyond or near the northernmost range of nectivorous bats, however.

In central and southern Arizona, *Agave chrysantha* has evolved minor shifts in floral characteristics – pollen dehiscence (maturation) closer to dawn, production of nectar later at night, a sweeter floral scent, and bright yellow color – that may promote a multiple pollinator syndrome. Pollination occurs when animals accidentally contact receptive stigmas while foraging. Liz Slauson found that hummingbirds are unlikely pollinators of *Agave chrysantha*,



*Penstemon parryi*

however, as she seldom observed hummingbirds' touching stigmas. Instead, the nectar is an important food source for the nectar-robbing hummingbirds.

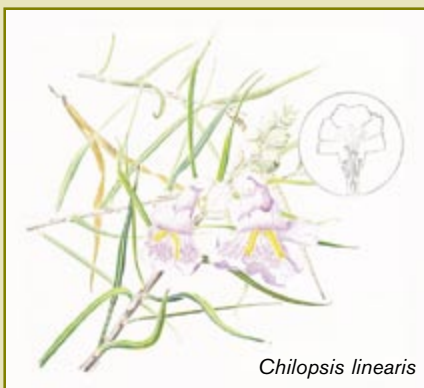
## Plant-pollinator landscapes

Pollinator syndromes like ornithophily are not exclusive. In *The Forgotten Pollinators*, Stephen Buchmann and Gary Nabhan

highlight the more useful concept of the plant/pollinator landscape proposed by Judith Bronstein. Pollination systems are often more complex than floral shape and structure would suggest. Evidence shows that flowers attract a broader range of visitors than expected. Nevertheless, data indicate that many species conforming to a particular syndrome are pollinated most effectively by the agent associated with that syndrome: bee, moth, bird, etc.

Some plants have evolved flowers to ensure that hummingbirds visit and pollinate them. Yet plants pollinated by hummingbirds are also visited by other creatures, particularly bees. This observation supports the plant-pollinator landscape concept, rather than an ornithophilous syndrome. Knowledge of how to conserve the environment might be enhanced by

additional knowledge of plant-pollinator system's efficacy. Surprisingly, nectar-robbing by a carpenter bee can be beneficial to a plant like *Chilopsis linearis*. When hummingbirds visit *Agave chrysantha*, they appear to be nectar-robbers rather than pollinators.



*Chilopsis linearis*

Researchers could investigate whether or not this is harmful to the plant's health. 🐦

*Agave chrysantha*



## REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Learn more about the Migratory Pollinators Program of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum at <http://www.desertmuseum.org/pollination/>.

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# An Interspecific Exploration of When and Why the Northern Mockingbird Sings

By Maximilian Werner

For the last five days a mockingbird has perched in our orange tree and has sung in earnest from about 2:00 to 4:00 in the morning. I like hearing mockingbirds sing, but not at 2:00 a.m.! Still, after about a week of hearing this nocturnal concert, I can more or less tune it out. Without this ability to filter sounds on the basis of their importance (for instance, the sound of screeching tires compared with the chirp of crickets), I don't think any of us would ever get more than a few minutes of sleep at a time.

I wonder to what extent the human auditory system has evolved to detect some sounds more readily than others. Just as we are prepared to detect survival-relevant sights, why wouldn't the same be true for greater survival-relevant sounds? I guess one question we could ask is if certain sounds currently have greater survival relevance than others, and if so, what those sounds might

“Last week I was out back caring for our tomato plants when I heard what sounded like the grating noise of a rusty hinge coming from the shamel ash tree in my front yard. I had heard the sound before and recognized it as a mockingbird.”

example, elephants use a form of sonic communication that enables them to communicate over vast distances of savanna unbeknownst to humans and other animals. Of course elephants make higher frequency sounds as well. This raises another question: why do animals make, and how do we normally

to compete. Birds and other animals are also known to sing as a way of demarcating territory. Wolves use their songs or howls for different reasons, but one is to alert other wolves to their presence and thereby establish their territory and avoid conflict. Whether animals make sounds to attract a mate or to signal territory, it seems to help if one can rise above the din (I think of the two little boys I saw the other day at the store, making a game of out-shouting the other). But I think there is at least one other explanation for our sensitivity to high-pitched sounds, and that is because we tend to associate high-pitched sounds with alarm, distress, and excitement.

Last week I was out back caring for our tomato plants when I heard what sounded like the grating noise of a rusty hinge coming from the shamel ash tree in my front yard. I had heard the sound before and recognized it as a mockingbird. As I listened I heard the same sound coming from my neighbor's ficus tree across the street. Curious, I walked slowly toward the ash tree to see if I could get a look at the maker of this obnoxious noise. High in the branches sat a fledgling mockingbird. The absence of long tail and primary feathers; the presence of downy, speckled chest-feathers; and a very large, yellow-rimmed, ridiculous looking mouth were diagnostic. A moment later, mom or dad flew into the tree with an insect-laden beak and proceeded to feed the flailing fledgling, which signaled its eagerness by flapping its tiny wings and by increasing the rate and volume of its noise.

I started thinking about the different species of birds I have seen, including robins, hummingbirds, and even the eagle chicks for whom Ace Ventura, Pet Detective stopped to regurgitate some food while scaling a precipice. Although varying in size and coloration, these chicks have several things in common, including their downy appearance, high-pitched cries, and disproportionately large and colorful mouths. This interspecific uniformity is



Photo courtesy of Mr. T on Flickr

have in common. In other words, how is it that hearing certain sounds and not others helped (and help) us to survive? Perhaps the answer has something to do with the sonic mean, in which case it would have been and still is helpful to hear and make sounds with frequencies distinct from the mean. For

interpret, higher frequency sounds?

Remember the mockingbird in my orange tree, singing in full-throated ease at 2:00 a.m.? Male mockingbirds that have not had success attracting a mate will sometimes sing late at night, when there are fewer sounds including the songs of other males with which



likely an example of an epigenetic rule, in which case normally developing chicks, regardless of species, will possess this characteristic because in the case of the super-sized mouth—it helped to ensure the conveyance of food from parent to offspring. Thus, the more we can do to ensure certain outcomes, in this case feeding, the better. But having a large and colorful orifice into which food may be easily stuffed is only useful to the extent that the parent is encouraged to return with food. This may explain why mockingbirds have developed such an effective attention-getting, sonic complement to their enormous mouths.

Mockingbirds are beautiful and elegant birds. I think it's because of their delicacy that I am often so surprised by their spunk and willingness to dive-bomb our cats, sometimes, it seems, for the sheer joy of seeing them duck in fear. This element of playfulness seems to disappear, however, when there are offspring involved. After three or four days of watching the mockingbirds carry out their parental responsibilities, I realized that there were actually two fledgling chicks, each in a separate tree. Except for a call or two, the chicks were silent until the parents returned with food or had alighted nearby, which is when the noise-making would begin. But what made me most curious was this homeless strategy of rearing young. I have never seen a mockingbird nest, but given the bird's small size, I suspect they make comparatively small nests. Even if the adults had built a nest twice their size, I can certainly see how difficult it would be to accommodate two little fatties such as these fledglings. Still, considering their weakness as fliers and their inability to feed themselves, these birds seem a bit young to have left the nest. Perhaps the nest was disrupted or destroyed? Whatever the case, the mockingbird seems to have found effective ways of dealing with this worst-case scenario.



*Photo courtesy of The Holy Hand Grenade on Flickr*

This particular pair of fledglings is in a kind of developmental limbo or in-between time: On the one wing they're too big for the nest, and on the other wing they're weak fliers. An advantage to still being in the nest is that it is safer: nests tend to be well hidden and are easier to defend against predators. Because the adult mockingbird has its offspring in one place, it can in effect protect multiple chicks simultaneously. Now that they have left the nest and are therefore more vulnerable, the reverse logic is used: by quietly sitting in separate trees, the chicks presumably stand a better chance of going undetected. In the event of an attack, the adult mockingbirds would only have one chick to defend, the other being safely hidden away in some other location. If attacked, a chick's inexperience and poor flying ability might handicap the adults' attempt to protect it. This apparent disadvantage would seem magnified by the presence of multiple chicks. Chick dispersal therefore seems to be an effective defensive strategy, but it could also function as an insurance policy as well. For assuming one chick is lost to predation, the parents would still have the remaining chick. Thus, what might seem like parental negligence could be, given the challenges faced by mockingbirds, actually just common sense.

In fact, based on my observations of this drama as it often plays out between the mockingbirds and my cat, Bella Jean, I would argue that mockingbirds are among the most loyal parents I've seen. They often put themselves in harm's way by flying dangerously close to the cat and alighting nearby. Once they've gotten Bella Jean's attention, they then give her a good tongue-lashing. Both the feeding call and the alarm call of a mockingbird are hard on the ears, but the alarm call bursts into, whereas the feeding call scrapes across, the eardrum. The feeding call is comparatively discreet and also difficult to trace, which must be useful in helping the chick remain undetected. In order for the alarm call to be effective, however, it must be loud and clear and easily traced to an angry parent. Otherwise the strategy of distracting the cat would fail. Compared to mine, Bella Jean's hearing is probably very sensitive, so I can only imagine how unpleasant the sound must be to her.

The notion that high-pitched sounds may have special significance for us is also supported by our extreme response to the sound of ambulance and police sirens. And that there is probably a sonic continuum of high-pitched sounds is illustrated by the broad range of human vocal abilities and how they

# An Interspecific Exploration of When and Why the Northern Mockingbird Sings cont.

affect us. In terms of sounds that signify and elicit excitement, alarm, and distress, my five-month old son Wilder's vocal abilities are illustrative. Few sounds please parents more than the voices of their contented infants. Thus, whenever Wilder, our own little Emperor of Ice Cream, delivers one of his pre-lingual, experimental orations, my wife Kim and I lovingly hang on his every coo and babble. At those times we tell him that we love his sweet little voice and encourage him to talk more. Wilder's fussing noises are sweet sounding, too, but they are tempered with minor urgency. If Kim and I do not respond appropriately to this gentle cue, the fussing

will intensify into bursts of outrage. Although amusing, these outbursts are characterized by their maximum urgency. Ok, he seems to be saying, this is serious. Wilder will tolerate a

laugh or two, but if his needs are not met immediately, his bursts of outrage transform into an all-out tantrum.

While each of these high-pitched sounds serves a particular purpose, each sound is similar given its importance to the survival of the signaler. I realize that the sound of a siren may not seem relevant to the cries of a mockingbird or a human infant's litany of coos. But what if we could trace the sound of the siren to an ancient repository of survival-relevant sounds? These sounds would have alerted our early ancestors and other animals to environmental dangers such as storms and predators; to the whereabouts of prey, and to the needs of our offspring. Although the forms or the causes of the sounds may have changed (compare the ancient sound of angry bees with recent sound of electricity flowing through wires overhead), we tend to more readily detect sounds above or below the sonic mean

because doing so helped us to survive and reproduce.

I came to this awareness thanks in part to the mockingbird in my orange tree, which for the past few nights has sat outside our window and sung into the early hours of the morning. Although I am at the point now where I can usually tune him out, the other night I confused one of his calls for an alarm. I could not fall back to sleep right away, so I just lay there and enjoyed the sounds of the night. Then I noticed some interesting differences between this bird's night style of singing and the singing style employed by birds during the day. Now that it is spring, when Kim, Wilder, and

“The daytime singer will string together every song he has, but the night singer is a minimalist. His songs cut deep into the suburban silence and into my dreams.”

I take our daily walk through the neighborhood, we can expect to see at least 10 mockingbirds perched high atop some tree, streetlight, or rooftop, where they all sing in earnest. I like the idea that the mockingbird

s song contributes in some small way to the refinement of Wilder's hearing, so I often pause on our walks so he ll have a chance to learn this lovely sound. The other day we stood beneath a mockingbird as it sang atop a streetlight. Their songs are so loud and clear, it is a wonder that some mockingbirds sing at night. But when I close my eyes I begin to appreciate the challenges of singing during the day.

Thus, at this very moment, there is a mockingbird singing from the rooftop across the street. His song floats in through my office window, and then it is gone, drowned by the ratatatata of two-propeller plane overhead. A few seconds later, singing again, a whistle borrowed from the Curved-billed thrasher. Then a leaf-blower and the muffler of some tricked-out automobile. Did I just hear singing? I can't be sure. Those are the mournful sounds of doves resting in the shade of our grapefruit tree. A dog barking. Ah, there is the mockingbird again. Just a short trill. Now

children screaming and yelling in the schoolyard across the street. A verdin hopping and chip chip chipping in the bougainvillea. Above it all, the maniacal clucking and cackling of male grackles.

Out of this cacophony of competing sounds, the mockingbird's day style of singing emerges, which involves singing more or less continuously. To some extent the song succeeds in rising above the din, but it is diluted. Even so, by singing more or less nonstop, the bird capitalizes on any windows of silence that may open. The night style of singing is just the opposite. Apart from the horn of a passing train, or the far-off sound of a siren, very little can be heard in the early morning hours. The noisy humans are asleep, and so for the most part the mockingbird in our orange tree has the airwaves to himself. Thus the night style emerges. The bird sings a particular set of notes for three or four seconds, then pauses, perhaps listening for any responses. Then he sings another set of notes and waits a little longer. Unlike his daytime counterpart, rarely will he sing for more than a few seconds at a time. The daytime singer will string together every song he has, but the night singer is a minimalist. His songs cut deep into the suburban silence and into my dreams.

Clearly the sonic environment has a lot to do with what and how we hear. Because of these environmental contingencies, when our eyes close for the night our ears take over and keep us connected to the world around us. While it is certainly true that background noise affects our detection of anomalous sounds, in a nocturnal setting the auditory system temporarily replaces the visual system as the primary sense. Thus, just as the eyes function best in certain light levels, so might the ears have developed a heightened sensitivity at night, one that would help offset the disadvantage of having compromised or outright useless eyesight. After all, throughout pre-human and human history the majority of threats and hazards occurred during the night. Therefore it would have been helpful to develop greater auditory sensitivity during the proverbial hard time of night. 🐦



# Rep. Gosar removes NEPA oversight from Oak Flat Land Swap

By Bob Witzeman

“A Land Ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it.”

— Aldo Leopold (1887-1948)

The U.S. House of Representatives held a hearing on a new version of the Oak Flat USFS Congressional Land Exchange (H.R. 904) on June 14. This time full, not partial NEPA exemption was folded into a bill favoring a foreign mining consortium, the Resolution Copper Company (RCC), composed of two of the world's largest mining corporations,



Summer, Devil's Canyon. It has nesting Peregrine Falcon, Sonoran Desert riparian raptors such as Black and Zone-tailed Hawks, and habitat for the endangered Arizona Hedgehog Cactus, *Echinocereus triglochidiatus arizonicus* and Ocelot, *Leopardus pardalis*.

Photo by Sky Jacobs

Rio Tinto- British, and BHP- Australian.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

It was not enough that the end result of this legislation was that a foreign mining consortium would destroy two irreplaceable Sonoran Desert riparian masterpieces, namely Devil's Canyon, and the Lower San Pedro River. H.R. 1904 was introduced by Flagstaff dentist and freshman Republican Congressman, Paul Gosar. If approved by Congress, it would give 2400 acres of U.S. Forest Service (USFS) land to two foreign mining companies while exempting one of the largest copper mines proposed in North America from the

This landmark bill, NEPA, passed by Congress in 1969, is probably the most important U.S. environmental protection law on the books and certainly as precedent-setting as the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The H.R. 904 congressional testimony of Roger Featherstone of the Arizona Mining Coalition pointed out:

“The bill mentions NEPA but then takes the teeth out of the federal decision-making process. The language states that prior to commencement of mining in commercial quantities, Rio Tinto must submit a mining plan of operation to the Secretary of Agriculture and that the Secretary must complete a NEPA review of this plan within three years. It does not say what this mining plan should include nor does it mention what the Secretary can do if the plan is inadequate or incomplete. It says that this NEPA document would



RCC's mine would destroy and dewater Devil's Canyon, one of Arizona's most ecologically outstanding Sonoran Desert riparian habitats including lush stands of Fremont Cottonwood, three species of willow, Arizona Black Walnut, Arizona Ash, four species of Oak, Arizona Alder, Arizona Sycamore and Arizona Cypress.

Photo by Charles Babbitt

## Rep. Gosar removes NEPA oversight from Oak Flat Land Swap cont.

be the only document prepared to guide federal officials regarding federal actions or authorizations related to the mine. Never mind that NEPA is a law meant to give federal land managers a chance to "look before they leap" and that this exercise in futility would already have a mandated outcome. Never mind that the plan would not have to be written until the mine was already built, and never mind that the land in question would be private property, so there may never be a federal nexus that would trigger NEPA."

Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon by separate Executive Orders decreed that this U.S. Forest Service land area, located in a heavily abused mining area, was of such unique environmental, cultural, recreational and strategic value that it should never be mined!

For one of the largest copper mines in the U.S. to be proposed without enforceable NEPA oversight is deeply troubling. By circumventing NEPA and privatizing 2400 acres of irreplaceable USFS land, RCC would remove the input of Arizona and U.S. citizens, the U.S. Forest Service and other federal agencies from providing full, meaningful, enforceable statutory protection of the project's wildlife, environmental, cultural, demographic and industrial impacts.

Over 180 private mines have been built on USFS and BLM land since the passage of NEPA in 1969. They underwent NEPA public and agency scrutiny and oversight. What is of note regarding Gosar's legislation is that Republicans, now the majority in the House, would propose to exempt RCC from our most basic

U.S. environmental protection statute.

Conservationist groups, including the Tucson Audubon Society, have protested that RCC's Australian partner, BHP, has obtained permission from the Pinal County Board of Supervisors to develop up to 35,000 homes along the San Pedro River (*Arizona Republic*, Dec. 12, 2005). This would dewater and destroy the Lower San Pedro River water table and riparian ecosystem. It would also dewater the BHP's "7B Ranch" land exchange land exchange property. Likewise, BHP's real estate development would dewater *endangered* Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo habitats on the Lower San Pedro River, and their endangered species riparian mitigation properties situated there and operated by the Salt River Project, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Nature Conservancy, and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Furthermore, BHP would destroy the water table supplying the mesquite bosque of their 7B Ranch congressional land exchange proposed swap property. Unlike most of the lush San Pedro River, the 7B's riverbed is seven miles of bone-dry, non-flowing riverbed unable to support cottonwood/ willow vegetation. 🌵



Winter. Devil's Canyon is a Sonoran Desert riparian masterpiece of springs, wetlands, limpid pools and cascading waterfalls. Some 90% of Arizona's riparian wetlands, critical to survival of Sonoran Desert birds, wildlife, and other species have been destroyed by dams, stream diversions, mining, groundwater pumping, grazing, etc.

Photo by Lisa Fitzner



# Gila: A Backyard Sit-Com

Cover photographer, Matt VanWallene got a chance to photograph the ongoing saga of a new Gila Woodpecker family; here is more of the story of the pair from the front cover.



Photography was difficult in the morning as the nest was on the west side of the cactus, thus 100% shade. When the entrance got full sun it was 110 degrees. Note the impressive tongue: it is no wonder they can easily raid hummingbird feeders!

**O**n the first day of June I saw a Gila Woodpecker with food in its mouth flying to a saguaro cactus in my neighbor's front yard. I had no idea how mature the hatchlings were so I started a daily ritual of being out at 6:30 in the morning to photograph the progress. During the first couple of days mom and dad met each other at the nest.



I actually saw the side of the nest vibrate as the youngster was pecking at it.



It was fun to watch what was brought for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The top shot of this next series was egg shells. Saw mom fly to a tree with a discarded dove eggshell. She took it apart and brought the pieces in. Subsequent to seeing this we started putting our eggshells out with the birdseed.



Finally, 20 days later I got a glimpse of one of the kids.



I was a bit disappointed as I was hoping for some climbing on the outside of the nest, but it was instant fledge. This bird went from this position to 30' away. It was the 25th of June.



Everyday they got a little bit braver.



Then one day something odd happened. The impatient kids pecked a hole in the side of the nest.



Did your brother ever lick the top of your head?



Time-dated material; do not delay!

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/](http://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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:monarchmorris@gmail.com)

#### Opinions

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