



The Cactus Wren·dition



Volume LXVIII, No. 3

Fall - 2014

Rosy-faced Lovebird

Photo by Matt VanWallene



Programs

programs

All programs will be held at our new meeting location: Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N 64th Street, Scottsdale, AZ (northwest corner of 64th Street and Oak Street, which is between Thomas Road and McDowell). Come and join us, and bring a friend!

September 2, 2014

Daren Riedle Developing Amphibian and Reptile Based Eco-tours on Private Lands in South Africa

South Africa is a global biodiversity hotspot. Much of the country is private property, often set up as hunting or wildlife watching concessions. In 2002 Daren began working with two landowners to develop alternative uses of their private hunting concessions during spring and summer. Since 2004 Daren has led five amphibian and reptile safaris. Birders have taken advantage of the free ranging aspect of the trips to engage in some DIY birding as well. Daren will share the development of these specialty tours along with their major highlights.

Daren is a herpetologist with an interest in the biology and conservation of turtles and tortoises. He holds a PhD in Wildlife and Fisheries Science and is a Senior Biologist for Environmental Planning Group (EPG) in Phoenix.



Daren Riedle

October 7, 2014

Gail Morris Chasing the Monarch migration through Arizona - what we've learned and the questions that remain

The Monarch is often considered the jewel of the butterfly world but little is known about its migration in the western US. It was once believed that Arizona was too hot and too dry for Monarchs. But instead, could Arizona be the western migration gateway? Learn what we've untangled about the migration and breeding behavior of Monarch butterflies in Arizona and the importance of native *Asclepias* species.

Gail Morris is Coordinator of the SW Monarch Study and Monarch Watch Conservation Specialist for Arizona and the west. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Monarch Butterfly Fund, which supports research and development in the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve in Mexico.



Monarch Butterfly

November 4, 2014

Hugh Grinnell Saving the Great American West: The Story of George Bird Grinnell

This program is sponsored in part by Arizona Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The West that George Bird Grinnell first encountered in 1870 as a 21 year old was shortly to disappear before his eyes. Nobody was quicker to sense the desecration or was more eloquent in crusading against poachers, hide-hunters, and the disengaged U.S. Congress than George Bird Grinnell,



Hugh Grinnell reenacting ancestor George Bird Grinnell

the "Father of American Conservation." He founded the first Audubon Society, co-founded the Boone and Crockett Club with Teddy Roosevelt, and led the effort to establish Glacier National Park.

After discovering an old Great Northern Railway passenger car named "Grinnell Glacier," Hugh Grinnell researched the car's name, only to learn that the glacier was named in honor of the efforts of his distant cousin, George Bird Grinnell, a naturalist and explorer.

December 2, 2014

John Alcock How to Become a Bug Watcher

John Alcock is a life long birder with a continuing enthusiasm for these creatures. But in 1970, Alcock shifted from studying bird behavior to looking at insects in the field. This activity is a wonderful complement to birdwatching. Insects lead lives of great drama; they are everywhere, almost begging to be observed; and no special training is required to become a bug watcher. Birders can expand their horizons greatly by focusing down and spending a little time getting to know something about [insect] life on a little-known planet. Try it; you'll like it.

John Alcock, Emeritus Professor at Arizona State University, is a behavioral ecologist. He has authored many books, including In a Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects (1999).



John Alcock

Committees/Support

Arizona Audubon Council Rep
Emerson Stiles
estiles2@hotmail.com

Bookstore
Mel Bramley
480 969-9893

Hospitality
David Chorlton
602 253-5055

Web Page
Michell Peppers
480 968-5141
burge@burgenv.com

Maricopa Audubon Website
<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>

Maricopa Audubon Phone
480 829-8209

"Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

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.



On the Cover: Rosy-faced Lovebird
Focal Length: 220mm, 1/160 sec, f/13, ISO 400, +0.3 bias.
Gilbert Water Ranch, July 2010 by Matt VanWallene

Matt says: I saw my first lovebird when it was called peach-faced. It officially became the Rosy-faced Lovebird in December 2012 when the American Birding Association added it to its official list of bird species found in the US. Native to southwestern Africa, the Phoenix population descended from domesticated stock.

President's Message

by Mark Larson



Mark W. Larson

I hope that all of you have enjoyed your summer but it now time to get into the swing of the fall season! That means regular monthly meetings and almost weekly field trips with the Maricopa Audubon Society. Larry Langstaff is our new Field Trip Chair and he has put together some diverse and fascinating trips for you to experience. In addition, our Program Chair, Laurie Nessel, has organized a slate of intriguing programs for our meetings—programs that you won't want to miss—so be sure to highlight your calendar for the first Tuesday evening in the month to attend!

Two summers ago in this column I discussed my visit to the White Mountains that only a year earlier had been devastated by the half-million-acre Wallow Fire. I described a landscape that had obviously suffered huge damage, but had also been spared total annihilation as had been reported by the media. This June I made another trip there and saw substantial recovery taking place, even in the most severely damaged portions of the forest. Despite the ongoing recovery efforts of Mother Nature, it will take decades before this landscape and its habitat will return to something approximating its former character. Perhaps, though, it should never return to that condition, instead remaining more open, and more available to wildlife.

As will be mentioned elsewhere in this issue, our monthly meeting location will change this season. No longer will we be meeting at the Desert Botanical Garden, but we will meet at a nearby location with easier access, especially after dark. The Church of the Brethren on 64th Street just north of Oak Street welcomed us last December and will be our hosts for all of our meetings in 2014. However, we will maintain a relationship with the Garden and we may hold special events there in the future.

As always, I welcome your comments and suggestions about how we may serve you, our members, and provide a richer, more rewarding Audubon experience. 🐦

Letter from the Editor

by Gillian Rice



Gillian Rice

This past spring I welcomed a new visitor. A Say's Phoebe came to my birdbath daily. I like to think it was the same individual. In June I watched it take a bath. I was surprised because I had thought my rather overgrown backyard with fruit trees and vegetable garden was not the place to attract a phoebe. In contrast, when I taught in Glendale, Say's Phoebes bred on the Thunderbird campus and foraged on the edge of a large open area of adjacent undeveloped land.

Inherent in most articles in this issue is a sense of place. Vicki Hire contemplates her new home on the edge of the Sonoran Desert: with what wildlife does she share her new abode? Diana and William Herron take us to Red Tank Draw. Mark Larson reports on

his recent trips to Costa Rica and Texas. Tom Gatz wonders about the place where a woodpecker stores its long tongue, and Ron Rutowski considers the placement of iridescent coloration on the male Pipevine Swallowtail's wings.

I report on Troy Corman's MAS banquet presentation about seasonal distribution and status changes of Arizona birds. Factors like climate change affect distribution. And some birds just seem to get lost; for example, on June 22, I was puzzled to find a male Common Yellowthroat at the pond in the Desert Botanical Garden. The DBG checklist classifies it as an uncommon winter visitor. I logged it into eBird – my first ever online record!

The Conservation Column is missing in this issue as Bob Witzeman takes a well-deserved break. We hope to have more of his writings again soon, however.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Many thanks to all contributors. Do contact me at editor.wrendition@yahoo.com if you have ideas for content, material to submit, or feedback. I'd love to hear from you. 🐦

First and Future Sightings

By David Chorlton

*In summer's dream
the birds return
to show themselves
as they appeared
the first time. A Band-tailed
Pigeon rises
from the tree that leans
across a feeder, where
a Juniper Titmouse has
stopped in the shadow
from which a Lesser
Goldfinch flashes into
yellow sun. It was a long
bright afternoon the day
the creek ran slowly
and on the other side
a trogon flew out
from the oaks and back
into their shade. Stilled
a moment in the heat
one of many Vermilion
Flycatchers topped
a fencepost at the gate
that opened to the path
leading to the bed
of stones beneath
a leafy arch, which ran
to a rise where the sky
delivered a kettle
of vultures in slow
descent to the bare
limbed trees where
they roosted while
swift nighthawks
bore the night on their wings
as they paled out of sight
and came back and came
back looking almost
but never quite
the same way twice.*

Notes & Announcements



L to R, Bob Witzeman, Lori Snow, and Mark Larson

BOB WITZEMAN RECEIVES AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

At the MAS annual banquet May 6, Conservation Chair Bob Witzeman received the Fifth Annual Herbert Spencer Fibel Memorial Award (formerly Herbert Larson Memorial Award) for Distinguished Service to Maricopa Audubon Society. Bob has devoted his life to conserving Arizona's environment. Membership Chair and Past President Scott Burge announced Bob as the award recipient, saying: "You can hardly go up a road or down a creek where Bob's efforts to reduce overgrazing didn't occur." Lori Snow, daughter of the late Herb Fibel, presented Bob with a framed photograph of the Sonoran Desert. Bob also received an engraved plaque for his service to MAS.



Mary Rose

PROJECT FLIGHT PLAN: A NEW JOURNEY FOR BIRDS

Sadly, because of weather conditions and safety reasons, Mary Rose had to withdraw from the Great Pacific Race to Hawaii. Bitterly disappointed, she was not about to give up for the sake of the birds. She arranged to row from Santa Barbara to San Diego, stopping off at ports along the way to promote and talk about bird conservation. Visit <http://maryrows.com/blog/> to support Mary and read about her experiences.

ARIZONA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS (AZFO) 8TH ANNUAL MEETING

October 3-5 2014, Globe-Miami, AZ
Keynote Speaker: Charles van Riper III
Theme: Arizona's Changing Avifauna
Field Trips: The Sierra Ancha (Troy Corman), Pinal Mountains (Dave Pearson), Haunted Canyon (Doug Jenness), San Carlos Lake (Eric Hough), and more to be announced soon.

The meeting is open to anyone who enjoys observing, surveying, or conducting research on Arizona's birds. Registration information at www.azfo.org
Call for presentations and posters open until September 15.

IN MEMORIAM: CHARLOTTE CAREY NORRID



Charlotte Carey Norrid

On June 19, 2014 at the age of 96, long-time MAS member, Charlotte Norrid, passed away in Tucson. Charlotte attended many MAS meetings. She was a keen birder and when she retired from teaching adults at the Maricopa County Skill Center, traveled to England, Costa Rica, Kenya, Belize, the Galapagos Islands, and Ecuador for birding vacations.

BIRDERS' WEEKEND SPECIAL

Noftsgers Hill Inn September 27, 2014 BIRDING BY EAR

Join Kathe Anderson on Saturday evening, September 27, for an interactive class exploring the basics and some unusual aspects of BIRDING BY EAR. What do you HEAR?

Birds make a lot of sounds. We're all familiar with bird song, but many species have a variety of voices—and make other noises, including wing sounds and bill tapping. Most of us rely on our eyes for bird identification, but listening to birds is another dimension for enriching your

birdwatching. We'll discuss the variety of bird sounds, why birds sing, how songs are described in books, how you can learn them, and how to make them work for you, even if you think you're musically-challenged! The complimentary bird walk on Sunday morning, in the Pinal Mountains, will include visual identification, and lots of listening to apply the information and techniques discussed in the class.

Kathe Anderson is an avid birder, leading bird walks and teaching classes for a variety of conservation organizations, as well as counting birds for several bird surveys to help scientists with data collection. She has led hundreds of walks and taught dozens of birding-related classes. She loves sharing her passion with others!

Double occupancy rooms at Noftsgers Hill Inn range from \$90 - \$135 plus tax, including breakfast, for this adults only event. Twenty percent discount for second consecutive night booking for this special event. Additional per person fee of \$25 for the Saturday BIRDING BY EAR class.

For complete details about the Bed, Breakfast & Birds program, call MAS member Rosalie at 928-425-2260, or visit the website www.noftsgershillinn.com

BURROWING OWLS

Gilbert Park Rangers request that photographers and other people do not feed Burrowing Owls at Zanjero Park. At the time of going to press, baby owls were begging for store-bought worms and losing their fear of people. If this persists, the Burrowing Owls might have to be removed.

SIGN UP FOR THE E-NEWSLETTER!

To receive updates and supplements to *The Cactus Wren•dition*, sign up for the monthly (September to May) e-newsletter. It includes meeting and field trip reminders, special events, and citizen science projects. To subscribe, contact laurienessel@gmail.com

Note: We do not use the email list for anything other than the described purpose.

Hummingbirds: A Life-size Guide to Every Species by Michael Fogden, Marianne Taylor, and Sheri L. Williamson. New York: Harper Design (An Imprint of HarperCollins Publishers), 2014, 400 pp., \$29.99.



Hummingbirds--Every Species

Breaking new ground, this is the first book in the modern era to address the world's hummingbird species, all 338 of them. Hummingbirds, of course, are unique to the New World. In the 17th and 18th Centuries, wealthy European collectors were astonished when hummingbird skins were first sent back from the Americas and that was without having ever seen hummingbirds fly! In this book the three authors have produced a creditable 400-page volume that is pleasant to read or browse or both.

The book is organized in a field guide format. After a foreword by Pete Dunne, the authors discuss hummingbird taxonomy and evolution, color and courtship, and molt and migration. Then, a small inset box describes "How to use this book" providing brief notes about the species order, measurements, maps, and status as provided on each page of the following section, the Hummingbird Directory.

This is the heart of the book. On each page or pair of pages, each species is described and at least one life-size color photograph is provided. Usually it is a photograph of the male, sometimes both sexes are depicted, and in a few cases, only

the female is illustrated. However, the final 74 species at the end of the book are described in a single column with no photograph at all!

The distribution of each species of hummingbird is shown as red color on a small map. In many cases the color is difficult to see. For example, the Coppery-headed Emerald, one of Costa Rica's few endemic species, has a small range in its home country, yet it is shown

as a miniscule red dot on a map that covers eastern North America south to northwestern South America!

In short, this book is not a field guide and is not suitable for use in identifying similar, confusing species. There is little mention of key field marks. While the weight is given it is a fairly useless characteristic in the field, but bill length, curvature, and color, and the bird's vocalizations would be helpful additions.

As an overview of the world's hummingbird species this work is significant and laudable. The incredible diversity and a hint of the beauty of hummingbirds come through to the reader. If one of the unstated goals of the authors was to produce a book that left its readers wanting to experience hummingbirds for themselves in the wild, then it can be considered successful in that regard.

I should note that the junior author, Sheri Williamson, lives in Bisbee and is a founding director of the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory. She is also the author of the Peterson Field Guides' *A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America*. 🐦

A Tangle or A Teapot

By Gail Cochrane

To see a saguaro cactus you must come to the Sonoran Desert, and likewise with the Abert's Towhee, a shy but engaging bird. This member of the sparrow family has one of the smallest ranges of any North American bird species, making it a prized sighting for birders and a familiar face for desert dwellers.

Secretive Abert's Towhees are described in field guides as residents of thick brush in Sonoran riparian corridors, usually cottonwood and willow woodlands along rivers and streams. Yet these birds hang around my backyard, pecking and scratching on the ground for insects and seeds. They find cover in the creosote and chuparosa we've planted and sip the water trickling from the cement lip of our fountain.

The native waterways that make up the towhee's traditional range have mostly dried up. Growing demands on ground water have brought many of Arizona's desert streams to a nonexistent or strictly ephemeral status. Water collects in these channels after rains, but the amount is insufficient to bring the water table up to the surface level of the stream beds. Suburban yards, particularly those planted with native species that attract insects and produce seeds have proven to be havens for these displaced songbirds.

Abert's Towhee is a homebody. He keeps to a small home range and mates for life. In a romantic ritual, the male woos the female by feeding her seeds and the two sing duets together. Throughout the year towhee pairs forage together, calling to each other often, always strengthening the bond. The female weaves a large open cup-shaped nest and may decorate the outside with flowers. She lays 1-4 eggs that are pale blue with brown markings.

Towhee nests are sometimes targeted by cowbirds. The invaders lay their own eggs in the towhee nest and their stronger, more aggressive chicks outcompete the parents' own babies. But Abert's Towhees have resisted predation and habitat loss. Small numbers continue to show up in newly expanded ranges along Oak Creek near Sedona and along rejuvenated reaches of the Santa Cruz River south of Tucson.

This ability to adapt is why we see the birds around town. Did you know if you see a group of Abert's Towhees together you can claim you've seen a tangle of towhees? Or if it seems appropriate, a teapot of towhees works too. 🐦

A Sonoran Desert enthusiast, Gail tries not to miss nature's daily dramas. She blogs at www.onelookout.com

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

field trips

Car Pooling: Please make every effort to organize your own car pool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. Be courteous to the trip leaders and help cover their gas costs. We recommend that passengers reimburse drivers 10 cents per mile each.

Reminders:

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

Day Passes: Many locations in the National Forests require Day Use Passes. For details, see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/tonto/passes-permits>

Friday-Sunday August 15-17

Q Ranch (NE Gila County)

Join educator Ken Furtado and ASU Professor Pierre Deviche to explore the birds, dragonflies and damselflies (*Odonata*) in this historic ranch setting below the Mogollon Rim. Both leaders are excited to discover more *Odonata* to add to the checklist of this area, while also documenting the active birdlife in the middle of the monsoon season. Full details and registration information at <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org/Q%20Ranch%202014.pdf>
This experience, complete with meals and comfortable sleeping accommodations, includes a donation to Maricopa Audubon Society!

Friday September 5

Christopher Creek (east of Payson).

Leave Fountain Hills about 5:30 am to arrive at sites around Christopher Creek about two hours later. Explore a subdivision where birding has been excellent in the past, plus some Tonto National Forest sites before heading south again after lunch, arriving back in Fountain Hills before 3:00 pm. This trip usually provides a nice variety of neotropical migrants; one year we almost had to beat the Western Tanagers away

with a stick! Black-headed Grosbeaks, Western Bluebirds, flycatchers, warblers, swallows, Steller's Jays and Band-tailed Pigeons seen in previous years. Limit 8. Leader: Kathe Anderson

kathe.coot@cox.net

Saturday September 13

Glendale Recharge Ponds

These ponds in the west Valley should provide an assortment of waterfowl, raptors, passerines and hopefully some unusual shorebirds during their southward migration. You never know what will be around here, as the water in the ponds fluctuates and changes often. Dress for intense desert heat and sunlight. Spotting scopes beneficial. Meet at 8:00 am.

Leader: Melanie Herring

mherring5@cox.net

September/October, Date TBA

Stewart Mountain Desert Tortoise Quest

Have you ever seen a Sonoran Desert Tortoise in the wild? Increase your chances of stumbling upon one of these iconic desert creatures by searching in their preferred habitat after a summer monsoon. For this reason, we are not setting an exact date for this trip near Saguaro Lake. Learn about the behavior, life cycle, and status of this keystone species. Difficulty level: moderate. Steep, rocky terrain and hot, humid weather. Bring snacks. Start near daybreak; back by noon.

Leader: Laurie Nessel. To be contacted (as late as the night before the trip) and get directions, send your email address to laurienessel@gmail.com

4th Sundays, September 28, October 26

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch

This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. Learn to identify local butterflies including Painted Lady, Queen, and Fiery Skipper as well as common dragonflies and damselflies such as Western Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer, Blue-ringed Dancer and Familiar Bluet. Suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred).

Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs available for sale, \$10. No reservations. Meet 7:00 am at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Road off Guadalupe Road in Gilbert.

Leaders: Janet Witzeman & Laurie Nessel

Monday October 6

Catalina State Park (near Oracle)

Leave Scottsdale about 5:30 am to arrive at the park about 7:30 am. Wander the birding trail first, spending about two hours, then explore more of the park, a stunning desert jewel. We'll see what the weather is going to be before we decide to pack a picnic lunch or eat in a restaurant. Although October is a difficult time to predict, Catalina State Park (\$7 fee per vehicle) is reliable for common desert species such as Phainopepla, Abert's Towhee, Verdin, and Gila Woodpecker, as well as Cooper's Hawk, Pyrrhuloxia and Rufous-winged Sparrow. We might see a few lingering neotropical migrants or early winter sparrows. Return about 2:30 pm. Limit 8

Leader: Kathe Anderson

kathe.coot@cox.net

Saturday October 25

Picketpost Trail

Adjacent to Boyce Thompson Arboretum, this trail runs from lower desert to upper bajada habitat (junipers at the top, with great views of the Superstitions) with a small riparian stretch. See most of the common resident birds of Boyce Thompson (Black-throated Sparrows, Greater Roadrunners, Bewick's and Rock Wrens, etc.) and a chance of less common species including late migrants. Four miles round trip up and down and some rocky terrain on the second half of the trail. Meet at 8:00 am. End at around 11:00 am. Consider bringing a walking stick for the climb up the latter half of the trail. Difficulty level: moderate.

Limit 8

Leader: Myron Scott 489 968-2179

gaia_3@netzero.net

Sunday November 2, 2014

Lower Salt River.

Join a leader who has been along this birding route, close to the city, many times. Travel ten miles between Granite Reef Dam and Saguaro Lake, making

The Birding App: Friend or Foe?

by Gillian Rice

birding app

stops along Bush Highway. Purchase in advance the required Tonto National Forest day-use pass. A list of 50 species is common, and should include Spotted Sandpiper, Loggerhead Shrike, Belted Kingfisher, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and Rock Wren. Expect impressive sightings of raptors including Harris's Hawk, Osprey, and Bald Eagle. Bring lunch, and a telescope, if available. Easy. Limit 15

Leader: Richard Kaiser 602 276-3312

rkaiserinaz@aol.com

Friday November 7

Sedona Wetlands

Leave Scottsdale about 6:00 am to arrive at the wetlands about 8:00 am. The wetlands should be full of wintering waterfowl, and I expect common upland birds such as Spotted Towhee, nuthatches and Acorn Woodpeckers. If we have time and energy, we may make another birding stop. We'll see what the weather is going to be before we decide to pack a picnic lunch or eat in a restaurant. Return about 3:00 pm. Limit 8

Leader: Kathe Anderson

kathe.coot@cox.net

Friday December 5

Glendale Recharge Ponds or Tres Rios.

We'll visit one of these sites, depending on what's being reported online. Leave Scottsdale about 6:00 am to arrive at the ponds about 7:00 am. Both sites should be full of wintering waterfowl, plus some shorebirds. The sites have also been reliable for Bald Eagle, Osprey, common desert species and often something totally unexpected, such as gulls or terns. We'll wander the site for about three hours, regroup in a nearby coffee shop and go over our list. Return about noon. Limit 8

Leader: Kathe Anderson

kathe.coot@cox.net

Remember to sign up for the e-newsletter (see page 4) so that you can receive updated information on field trips.

Birders are as idiosyncratic as the birds they hope to see. I'm not a life lister, although I wish I had kept better records. I usually remember the circumstances under which I saw something special and to have an extraordinary experience in nature is my goal on outings. It doesn't even have to be a bird – I am just as thrilled to see a Coachwhip Snake as I am a Red-naped Sapsucker.

It's fun to join field trips and try to locate an unusual bird that the leader knows inhabits the area. I recall one such outing in England years ago. It was a summer evening excursion to a disused World War II airfield in a rural location – the haunt of Nightjars (*Caprimulgus europaeus*). In Maricopa County, one of our local birds in the same family, Caprimulgidae, is the Lesser Nighthawk (*Chordeiles acutipennis*).

Birders milled around in the growing darkness, hoping for a sighting of the rare Nightjar. Nothing else could be seen, but biting insects could be felt. Suddenly, a movement – a Nightjar wheeled close over our heads – I caught a mere glimpse but that was all.

Should we have done something to encourage the Nightjar to appear? No one used pishing techniques. I have never pished and don't much like it when my companions do so. Is pishing even outdated? Has the smartphone birding app eclipsed it?

Recently, I was birding with a group of people and someone used a smartphone app to attract a bird so that everyone could see it. I recalled something I'd read about people using bird sound apps to bring Nightjars out into the open on Brownsea Island in southwest England. A spokesperson for the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said: "Repeatedly playing a recording of birdsong or calls to encourage a bird to respond in order to see it or photograph it can divert a territorial bird from other important duties, such as feeding its young."

Birds use different vocal cues for different purposes. Male birds can discriminate between the vocal calls of neighbors and strangers. The partners of a monogamous couple can recognize each other. What do these facts imply with respect to the ethics of smartphone birding apps?

The American Birding Association's Code of Ethics advises birders to "limit the use of recordings and other methods of attracting birds, and never use such methods in heavily birded areas, or for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern, or is rare in your local area."

Mel White, writing for *National Geographic*, contends that smartphone apps are superb tools for helping us learn bird sounds so that we can recognize them in the field, but he concludes: "Here's the rule followed by many: If in doubt, err on the side of the bird, and keep your phone in your pocket." 🐦

Read more at:

<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2013/06/130614-bird-watching-birdsong-smartphone-app-ethics/>

and

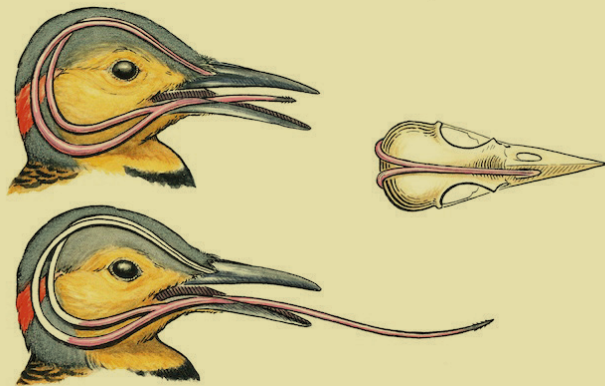
<http://www.mnn.com/green-tech/gadgets-electronics/stories/conservationists-are-peeping-mad-about-birdsong-apps>

Where Does A Woodpecker Store Its Long Tongue?

by Tom Gatz

The Gilded Flicker has a tongue that extends almost two inches beyond the tip of its bill. Where does its long tongue go when it is retracted? Does it roll up in the back of its mouth? No. Believe it or not, the flicker's long tongue is retracted into a sheath that wraps around the back and top of its skull, under the skin, and is attached in the right nostril. It turns out the hummingbirds store their long tongues in the same way. I found this information in an article from *Birder's World* (December 2006) that MAS member Carlos Oldham gives to students in his highly rated Desert Botanical Garden birding class. Carlos usually teaches this class every winter for Garden volunteers.

The *Birder's World* article mentions that flickers have brush-like barbs on the tips of their tongues that, when lathered with saliva, can capture insects and draw them directly into their mouths. Unlike most woodpeckers, flickers often forage for ants on the ground, especially near anthills, where their long, flattened, sticky tongues flick over the ground like those of anteaters.



Here is what the tongue would look like under the skin of a flicker's head. Illustration by Denise Takahashi.

Unlike the tongues of humans, which are primarily muscular, the tongues of birds are rigidly supported by a cartilage-and-bone skeleton called the hyoid apparatus. All higher vertebrates have hyoids of some sort; you can feel the "horns" of your own u-shaped hyoid bone by pinching the uppermost part of your throat. Because a woodpecker's tongue is way too long to fit in its mouth, storing it posed an evolutionary challenge. Several species of woodpeckers, including flickers, have solved the problem by sliding the base of their tongues (called



This female Northern Flicker, a winter visitor to Phoenix, has an obvious tongue storage challenge. Photo by Martin Dollenkamp

the "horns" of the hyoid apparatus) into sheaths that wrap around the back and top of their skulls. The base of this tongue support is anchored in the right nostril.

Other interesting adaptations seen in some species of woodpeckers include modified joints between certain bones in the skull and upper jaw, as well as muscles that contract to absorb the shock of the hammering. Strong neck and tail-feather muscles, and a chisel-like bill are other hammering adaptations that are seen in some woodpecker species, depending upon their foraging methods.

This explains how the Gila Woodpecker can hammer away, apparently headache-free, on our metal chimney screen early on spring Saturday mornings. The sound reverberates throughout our house, as the woodpecker announces its territory through this version of a woodpecker's "song". 🐦

(This article originally appeared in the Desert Botanical Garden volunteer newsletter, *Gatherings*).

Tom Gatz has been a MAS member since 1981.

One Really Mad Bird

by Mary Martin

While slowly trolling for crappie at Roosevelt Lake in the spring a few years ago, my husband and I were witnesses to a most interesting and entertaining interaction between birds.

We saw a Great Blue Heron at the water's edge trying to orient and lift a way-too-large catfish with his beak in preparation of swallowing it. The catfish was still alive, barely, and could not muster the strength to swim to deeper water.

Years ago in Mexico we had come upon a dead pelican with a dead fish in its pouch that was too large to swallow, leading us to note that greed is a bad thing and can lead to deadly consequences. We weren't seriously worried about the heron, as we thought no way could he suffer the pelican's fate. The heron, however, was not convinced of this impossibility and kept trying; it even jerked the fish up on the land, then dragged it back into the water to try again.

He must have worked for a good ten to fifteen minutes at his goal while we were watching, when suddenly an immature, but full-grown, Bald Eagle landed just a few feet from the heron. The heron battled the eagle with an impressive display of squawking and wing flapping and raised up on his toes like he was trying to appear to be enormous and vile-tempered to boot. I just didn't realize how vicious a Great Blue Heron could appear.

As soon as the heron had squawked himself out and regained a bit of composure, the eagle just stepped near and picked up the catfish and flew with it to a nearby grassy slope and began to pull off large chunks of flesh and swallow them.

We were spellbound as the heron repeatedly slashed his bill through the water, first from the right and then from the left. I thought he was just really, really ticked, but my husband said he was probably trying to get the catfish slime out of his beak. He did not look happy.

A group of Turkey Vultures landed near the eagle and one kept venturing closer and closer, obviously hoping to get some crumbs. Next a Common Raven arrived for the same purpose. The raven tried to take advantage of the eagle being distracted by the Turkey Vulture, but to no avail. Both species were outclassed, finally realized the futility, and took off.

The heron continued to slash his beak through the water, then stood quietly for a time, squawked his disapproval and left the scene of the crime. He complained all the way across the cove.

We, too, went home fish-less, but feeling greatly rewarded for being there. No squawking from us! 🦅

Mary Martin is a naturalist-by-love.



Great Blue Heron. Photo by Vicki Hire

Avian Humor by Holland West



Did that clown taste funny to you?

2014 Far Flung Field Trips

by Trip Leader Mark W. Larson

Southeastern Costa Rica

Early in April the less well-known southeastern region of Costa Rica was the location of this year's international trip. The small group of five began our 10-night stay in a cloud forest that is perched atop the lowland rain forest at an elevation of about 7,200 feet above sea level where it is usually cool, sometimes misty, and often chilly in the mornings. This is not the sort of climate a lot of people expect to find in the tropics!



Resplendent Quetzal. Photo by Bill Hebner

Perhaps the most sought after bird in the cloud forests of Costa Rica is the almost mythical Resplendent Quetzal and this year a pair was nesting just a hundred yards or so from our lodge.

The feeders at the lodge accommodated a never-ending stream of dazzling hummingbirds, tanagers, euphonias, and finches as well as the occasional Acorn Woodpecker or two.

After a morning of birding in the frigid and windy páramo at 11,000 feet for such species as Volcano Junco and Black-billed Nightingale-thrush, we moved downslope to a lodge located at about 6,000 feet where there were many new species to watch at the feeders and in the hedges, including the stunning Speckled Tanager.

We continued downslope to the middle elevations of the Wilson Botanical Garden near the border with Panamá and then south to the Pacific coast. Everywhere, the birds were dazzling, the people we met were welcoming, and the weather was lovely.

Our final lodge was at the southernmost edge of

the Tropical Dry Forest in Costa Rica. Within sight of its hilltop location were the mangroves of the Gulf of Nicoya and, in the opposite direction, was the Pacific Rain Forest of Carara National Park. This biologically rich ecotone provided some of the most rewarding bird and wildlife viewing of the trip, especially during our boat tour of the mangrove forest where we saw dozens of species that we had not encountered elsewhere on the trip. Even the *Almendro* or Beach Almond trees next to the lodge restaurant helped feed one of the most iconic birds of the Neotropics, the Scarlet Macaw.

Upper Gulf Coast of Texas

Later in the month of April, another group of five travelled to Texas to spend a week enjoying the spring spectacle of birds migrating, many non-stop across the Gulf, from their winter homes in the Neotropics. Our planned early departure was waylaid by mechanical difficulties, but the airline compensated us with generous breakfast vouchers. We were soon in Houston and on the road to the Gulf Coast. After lunch we visited Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge where we were treated to shorebirds, a few lingering ducks, and some confiding rails. Subsequent days were spent in the woods of High Island, on the beaches of the Bolivar Peninsula, and in the marshes near Galveston. We also spent an enjoyable morning among the remnant Longleaf Pine forest of the Big Thicket National Preserve where we encountered a number of southern pine woods species not found on the coast.

The nearly ideal weather and the diversity of habitats we visited resulted in a trip list of 174 species, including



Speckled Tanager. Photo by Bill Hebner



Scarlet Macaw. Photo by Bill Hebner



Turquoise-Browed Motmot. Photo by Bill Hebner



Laughing Gulls over the Bolivar Ferry on the Upper Texas Gulf Coast

24 warblers, 26 shorebirds, as well as 11 species of herons and egrets. Especially memorable were flights of Summer and Scarlet Tanagers and Baltimore and Orchard Orioles coming in to a drip. There were some maddeningly brief views of male Painted Buntings and more leisurely time observing such eastern birds as Hooded Warbler, Ovenbird, Black-and-White Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, and Rose-breasted Grosbeak.

Next year's spring Texas trip is planned to be a return to the always birdy Rio Grande Valley of South Texas. Look for details in a forthcoming issue of *The Cactus Wren•dition*. 🐦

Fiscal Year Ending May 31, 2014, Report and Wrap-up

by Matt VanWallene, Treasurer

Here is our fiscal year wrap-up report of income and expenditures for the fiscal year, which ended May 31, 2014. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Income

Audubon Membership	6,237.75
MAS Membership	6,072.00
Donations.....	5,850.85
Herb Fibel	2,435.00
Interest.....	774.40
Raffle	602.03
Books.....	209.55
Total Income.....	22,181.58

Expenditures

12 Environmental Grants.....	44,083.73
<i>Wren•dition</i>	15,007.38
Rent.....	2,500.00
NAS National Meeting	1,875.99
Insurance.....	1,429.00
Tax Prep.....	1,200.00
Phone & Supplies	656.82
Banquet.....	507.27
Birds of Phoenix.....	376.64
Honoraria	602.08
Website	307.05
Property Tax.....	55.18
Total Expenses	68,601.14

Arizona Creekbed Birding: a Fall Birding and Hiking Adventure at Red Tank Draw

by Diana & William Herron

In mid-November of last year we took advantage of some beautiful fall weather to explore Red Tank Draw near Rimrock in Yavapai County, Arizona. We accessed the draw at a one-lane bridge on Coconino Forest Road 618 about two miles east of Interstate 17 Exit 298.

A draw is a terrain feature formed by two parallel ridges with low ground in between them. The area of low ground itself is the draw. The low ground in Red Tank Draw is a rocky creek bed which at the time we were there only had some standing water. In the springtime, it has flowing water.

Most of the sides of Red Tank Draw are red sandstone similar to that found in the Sedona area. Some of the



Lichen Covered Rock and Juniper. Photo by William Herron

but together they can live on bare rocks and in other situations where few other plants can survive. Lichens play an important role in the initial stages of breaking rocks down into soil. [See photo "Lichen Covered Rock and Juniper"].

The habitat in the draw is riparian woodland with Arizona Sycamore as the dominant tree. The photograph "View North into Red Tank Draw" shows the colorful sycamore trees,

the red sandstone sides of the draw, and the surrounding pinyon juniper woodland habitat. The contrast between the lush riparian vegetation in the draw and the more arid landscape surrounding the draw is striking.

At the road bridge there was easy access into the draw and from there we hiked nearly a mile south on mostly rocky ground. (We recommend walking sticks for this type of terrain.) The Arizona Sycamore trees still had their leaves, but they were changing from green to bright yellow and brown. Many birds were seen and heard here, and American Robins seemed to be everywhere in the draw. Most of the red sandstone sides of the draw are vertical, but we found a place where there was a wildlife trail of sorts. We managed to scramble out of the draw on this trail to the area above the draw which consists of flatter terrain. The habitat above the draw is juniper woodland with prickly pear and other cacti and thorny plants such as crucifixion thorn. The view of Red Tank Draw from above was magnificent. We hiked around the area above the draw and then made our way back to the starting point on dirt forest roads.

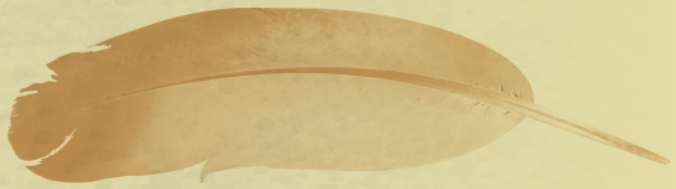
We hiked at least two miles during this adventure and observed 22 species of birds. The most numerous birds were Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Western Bluebird, American Robin, White-crowned Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, and Lesser Goldfinch. A very interesting observation was of a male Lesser Goldfinch feeding two fledglings. Our favorite bird that day was a lingering Black-chinned Sparrow.

Red Tank Draw would be worth visiting at other times of year to see the seasonal changes in vegetation and



View North into Red Tank Draw. Photo by William Herron

sandstone formations displayed varicolored patches of lichens, including some that were a dazzling chartreuse color. Some of you may have heard the story of Freddy Fungus and Alice Algae. They took a "lichen" to each other, but, sadly, their relationship is now on the rocks. As the story suggests, a lichen is a composite of two rather distinct organisms (fungus and algae) that grow in close association. Neither can exist without the other,



birdlife. During our fall visit we saw a mixture of resident birds and winter visitors. Two typical desert birds that we saw were Gila Woodpecker and Verdin. During this past winter, birders reported seeing hundreds of American Robins in the vicinity of the draw. Spring and summer birding when the sycamores are fully leafed would be different and enjoyable.

To see more photographs of this beautiful and fascinating area, see William Herron's flickr album at: <http://is.gd/22BObo>. Mapped locations for all of the photographs are presented with this album. 🐦

Diana and William Herron are long time Arizona birders who currently lead birdwalks at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix.



American Robin. Photo by Ray Spencer

troy corman

Troy Corman on Arizona Birds: Seasonal Distribution and Status Changes

By Gillian Rice

Am I really seeing more cormorants flying overhead when I bird in the city? Have you noticed anything new in the bird species you are seeing more of, fewer of, or at different times of the year?

At the MAS Banquet, guest speaker Troy Corman, Arizona Game and Fish Department's Avian Monitoring Coordinator captivated a record number of attendees, including a group of Bald Eagle nest watchers. His slide show and talk focused on the recent seasonal distribution and status changes of Arizona birds.

Much has happened since the publication of the *Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005), edited by Troy Corman and Cathryn Wise-Gervais, which includes data through the year 2000. For example, the Neotropic Cormorant was then rare. Now Arizona has 1500-2000 resident birds.

Birders spotted the first Eurasian Collared Dove in Arizona in 2000. Now they are thriving in every rural community, city, and even isolated ranches throughout the state. Will they outcompete White-winged Doves? "Maybe not," muses Corman. "White-winged Doves can be pretty testy."

Other birds are experiencing range contraction. Reasons vary. The American Dipper's breeding range reduction in the state is possibly due to the expansion of an introduced species, crayfish, which eat the dipper's aquatic prey. The fall in Black-billed Magpie numbers over

the past five to six years is likely partly due to corvids being hard hit by West Nile Virus. These magpies are also sensitive to dry and hot conditions and are at the southern edge of their range, an edge that might be creeping north with increasing temperatures. You can find these magpies now only in the extreme Four Corners region.

Warming temperatures mean that new species are overwintering. In southeast Arizona, some Christmas Bird



Grace's Warbler. Photo by Marceline VandeWater

Counts have record flocks of Scott's Orioles. Also on these counts, birders have seen 20-30 Cassin's Kingbirds roosting. "These birds just don't have go so far south anymore," Corman explains. Individual Grace's and Red-faced Warblers have also recently been found wintering in Arizona. Arriving earlier are Cliff Swallows, which begin

Troy Corman On Arizona Birds: Seasonal Distribution And Status Changes

Continued...

troy corman

nesting in February, a month when they were typically not even present before. Another early nester – in December and January – is the Great Blue Heron. It has learned that food sources are available then.

The Greater Roadrunner population north of the Mogollon Rim is increasing, likely due to warmer winters and minimal snowfall, allowing some recently to visit feeding stations in Flagstaff. The Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher has nested in Oak Creek Canyon and records are increasing in central Arizona. Recent new Maricopa County species have included Green Kingfisher (at Hassayampa Preserve), Least Grebe (2012), and Violet-crowned Hummingbird, species that have previously only been found locally in southeast Arizona.



Scott's Oriole. Photo by Matt VanWallene

"The Abert's Towhee is one of my favorite birds," declares Corman. "We have about 80 percent of the world's population in Arizona, which is about as endemic as you can get. It has even adapted to invasive tamarisks and irrigated urban backyards, so it's surprising that it is so adaptable and yet has such a restricted range."

One of the interesting "local ups and downs" is the relationship between the Cooper's Hawk and the Inca Dove. Based on data from Tucson area Christmas Bird Counts, Corman has a theory that since Cooper's Hawks have become resident and nest in Tucson, their expansion has contributed to the decline of



White-tipped Dove. Photo by Matt VanWallene

the Inca Dove, one of their prey items. Although this has not yet been the subject of scientific study, the correlation between the hawk's expansion and the dove's decline is clear. "The same thing is likely to happen in Phoenix," explains Corman.

"Although Cooper's

Hawks bred in outlying riparian areas, before 2000 we had no nest records of Cooper's Hawks in the city.

They are now beginning to nest in Paradise Valley and Scottsdale. If Cooper's

Hawks are resident year-round, the Inca Dove, not the wariest of birds, has limited chance to build up its numbers during its own breeding season."

Just one reason for changing population distributions rarely exists. Corman notes

that increasing numbers of urban roof rats may also contribute locally to the Inca Dove's decline.

What's on the horizon? Corman suggests the White tipped Dove, with its bright red legs, chestnut under-wing, and white-tipped tail. In Sonora, Mexico, it's already within 30 miles of the Arizona border. Similarly, the Sinaloa Wren does not migrate but is steadily moving north in Mexico with two individuals recently found in Arizona.

Two to three records of Slate-throated Redstarts have

been logged this year. More rare visitors are beginning to nest in Arizona. Look for the Short-tailed Hawk around Mt. Ord. Birders are thrilled to see rarities such as Lucifer, White-eared, and Berylline Hummingbirds; these hummers are now regularly nesting in Arizona. So even if you remain in our state on your birding jaunts, you have many opportunities to expand your life list and by submitting your records to eBird, you can help document the many population changes going on within our state! 🐦



Eurasian Collared Dove. Photo by Matt VanWallene



Sinaloa Wren. Photo by Marceline VandeWater

Female Pipevine Swallowtails Profitably Pay Attention to Male Coloration

by Ron Rutowski

Birders and butterflies know well that for many species they can tell males from females using differences in coloration between the sexes. A very active area of research in the field of animal behavior and a focus of the research in my lab at Arizona State University concerns the potential reasons for differences between males and females in coloration. As part of our work, we have been pursuing two questions about the bright, iridescent blue coloration on the upper hindwing surface of male Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies.

First, do females choose whether or not to mate with a male using his coloration? To answer this question we have done experiments in the Maxine and Jonathan Marshall Butterfly Pavilion at the Desert Botanical Garden. The Garden has graciously permitted us to use this facility during the summer when it is not used

as an exhibit. Our experiments generally go like this. We modify male coloration and then release modified and unmodified males into the pavilion with unmated females whose abdomens have been dusted with colored powder, a different color for each female. After 24 hours we capture all the males and females and determine which males have powder on their bodies and which do not. The color of the powder on the males tells us which females have mated with which males. Our results clearly show that males whose upper hindwing coloration has been completely blackened are much less successful at mating than males with unchanged, iridescent blue hindwings.

The second question we ask is: Do females benefit from having a preference for colorful males? We have tested

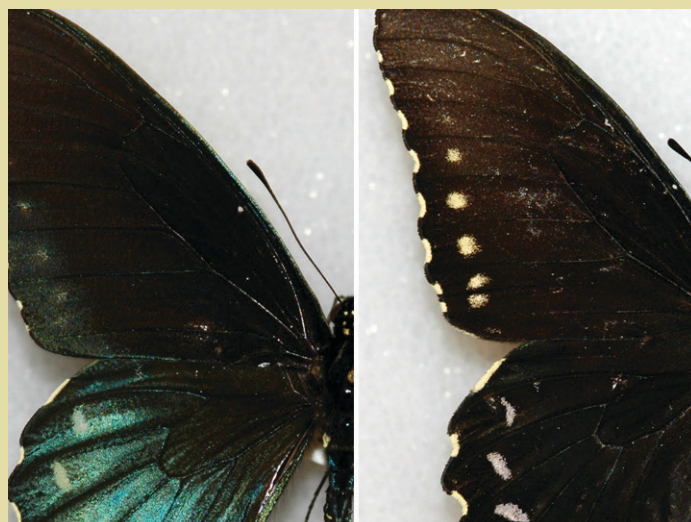
two types of possible benefits. One benefit may be nutrient materials that colorful males place along with sperm in their mate's abdomen during mating. Females use these nutrients for egg production. A second benefit may be genetic. If male coloration is under genetic control, females that mate with

colorful males would be more likely to produce colorful male offspring. We have found that males with colorful upper hindwings are likely to give females more material during mating and also carry genes for colorful hindwings. This suggests that both benefits may play a role in the evolution of female preferences for colorful males.

There are still many questions we have about sexual difference in coloration in butterflies. What specific genes control coloration? What are the physiological links between color and nutrients in males? Which type of benefit, genetic or material, is more important to females in nature?

What other explanations might there be for sexual differences in coloration? For us, finding out why males are so colorful in many animal species poses fascinating puzzles, and the results of experiments to solve those puzzles are sure to heighten our appreciation for all that sexual differences in coloration might mean. 🦋

Dr. Ron Rutowski is a Professor in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University, where he is particularly active in the administration of undergraduate research participation, both in his own lab and at ASU.



This shows the upper wing surfaces of a male and a female of the Pipevine Swallowtail butterfly. The sexual differences in the brightness of the blue on the upper hindwing surface is especially apparent.



A mating pair of Pipevine Swallowtails. The male is above.



A male Pipevine Swallowtail in the field on a popular nectar source, Clammy Weed. The male's iridescent blue reflection from the upper hindwing is very visible.



A male Pipevine Swallowtail in the field showing the bright iridescent blue on his upper hindwing surface.

All photos by Ron Rutowski

science corner

Living on the Edge ...

by Vicki Hire

All photos by Vicki Hire

For the past year or so, my family has been living on the edge, but not quite what you may be thinking.

We made the decision to rent out our Chandler home and experience living on the edge of the Sonoran Desert. One of the hottest and wettest deserts in North America, it covers approximately 120,000 square miles, stretching over southwestern Arizona, southeastern California, and the western half of the state of Sonora, Mexico.

Our piece of this amazing desert is just over three acres and like a raindrop is to an ocean, so is our plot in relation to the entire Sonoran Desert. But don't let that fool you. Even though small in size, it does not disappoint in the wonders it brings forth!

From the beautiful clear starry nights to the amazing sunsets; from the majestic saguaros which are only found in the Sonoran Desert to ironwood trees; from the tiniest Black-



Black Vulture bathing in our pool

squirrels digging tunnels nearby newly planted ocotillos, we were told these burrows actually benefited the plants by allowing for the draining of rainwater directly to the plants' root systems. A former science teacher, I couldn't resist the temptation to test the theory and flooded a burrow near one of the three ocotillos with water. Four weeks later that particular ocotillo had sprouted leaves, while the other ocotillos had not.

Other examples of symbiotic relationships are found in the numerous ironwood trees on our edge of the Sonoran Desert. These slow growing trees are considered "nurse" plants, hosting other plants and small animals. Several saguaros have been established beneath the canopies of our ironwoods.

While the palo verde provides a brilliant wash of yellow blossoms, it is the stately saguaro that is our favorite. We have counted 31, ranging from a height of 10 inches to 20 feet or more. Found only in the Sonoran Desert, its blossom is Arizona's state flower. It is also a slow grower, and can grow up to 60 feet tall making it the largest cactus in the United States. It's said to live between 150 and 200 years (www.desertmuseum.org). In spring, the saguaros provide white flowers with



Backyard on the edge of the Sonoran Desert

tailed Gnatcatchers and newly hatched Gambel's Quail to the hysterically funny roadrunner, there is always something to discover and enjoy.

And, as we are learning, there are many symbiotic relationships in this incredible desert to appreciate. Once, after expressing frustration over ground



Greater Roadrunners



Hadrurus arizonensis

tasty nectar, followed by bright red fruit for birds in summer.

For a bird lover, Living on the Edge provided a whole new opportunity to start over on a backyard bird list! After all, what typical birder's backyard list includes Black Vultures, Harris's Hawks, Bendire's and Curve-billed Thrashers, Cactus Wrens, Gilded Flickers, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Phainopepla, and the infamous Greater Roadrunner?

The Black Vulture pictured was one of a group of six, along with one Turkey Vulture, that had devoured a Black-tailed Jackrabbit carcass in less than eight minutes earlier that morning. Usually perceived as an ominous sign, in reality their role in the desert biome is critical. Unlike the Turkey Vulture, that hunts while soaring and uses both sight and smell, the Black Vulture finds its food only by sight. I'm told that it often follows a Turkey Vulture to the carrion. Fascinated, we watched as the Black Vulture and its mate decided to freshen up in our pool.

Black Vultures aren't our only "waterfowl." A pair of Greater Roadrunners visits our pool on occasion. And starting in May, Lesser Nighthawks arrive nightly just before dusk and swoop down for either a delightful bug or a drop of water. I've only managed one decent shot, as they are much quicker in flight than I am at focusing.

The water also draws visitors we're somewhat wary of such as Wolf Spiders and Colorado River Toads. One June morning we found thousands of newly hatched tadpoles in the pool. We've become experts in catching and



Ground squirrel burrows

releasing these critters. One animal we didn't dare catch was a Mountain Lion we observed drinking from the birdbath in our front yard– the first and only time we've seen this predator. We've become accustomed to finding various lizards, Longnose Snakes, centipedes, and even a large scorpion four inches long, likely *Hadrurus arizonensis*.

And that's exactly the "Living on the Edge of the Sonoran Desert" experience. So far, we wouldn't trade the excitement and wonder for city life. Instead, our goals are to turn our small piece of desert into a mini-arboretum, grow old taking in the unique beauty this desert holds, and smile as roadrunners and jackrabbits scurry through our front yard.



Gila Woodpecker on one of our many saguaros

Maybe one day, you'll decide to try Living on the Edge . . . and if not, at least the next time you hear that phrase you'll think Sonoran Desert! 🦅

Vicki Hire is an accountant and former science teacher; almost a native, she moved to Arizona in 1978.

Nature Through the Artist's Eye: Katie Lee



Connecticut Audubon Society's 2014 "Artist of the Year," Katie Lee, is a renowned botanical and wildlife artist and instructor.

A graduate of the New York Botanical Garden Botanical Illustration program, Katie has been an instructor at that institution for the past 23 years. She also teaches at the Coastal Maine Botanic Garden and Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens (Pittsburgh), and online courses for students worldwide. Katie teaches classes in drawing, watercolor, acrylic, and composition. She has led numerous sketching safaris to Botswana and South America.

Katie wrote and illustrated *Fundamental Graphite Techniques*, which is fast becoming the standard for basic drawing courses around the world.

Says Katie: "After my first one person show I was sent a tiny card with an illustration of a kite sailing across a blue sky. Inside were the words: 'Congratulations, you have found yourself, now anything is possible.'"

She continues: "I now teach, so that others may find their kite and string, and develop their individual artistic voice which will take them wherever they choose to go. All it takes is gentle, positive encouragement. I hope my paintings touch a heart, stir a sense of responsibility, or at least create an understanding that it is important to protect these precious species, so that future generations still see, in the wild, the wonders I have painted."

Katie's award-winning work can be found in private collections in England, Australia, the US, and South Africa. 🦉



Marsh Wren, 5" x 18", acrylic on board

We see these little birds when we walk by the lake. I love how they straddle reeds and sing their hearts out. Such joy.



Barred Owl, 22" x 30", acrylic on dyed goat skin vellum.

Red-shouldered Hawk, 22" x 30", acrylic on natural goat skin vellum



This series of paintings began with the purchase of the skins which fascinated me. I knew I did not want to stretch them but maintain the free edges and have the skins move. I needed to live with them for a while before I decided what subject would work best on each skin. The dark skin was clearly meant to be a night-time image so it was easy to think of an owl; the natural skin had a darker area that seemed to replicate a rock or tree stump - so the hawk landing made sense.



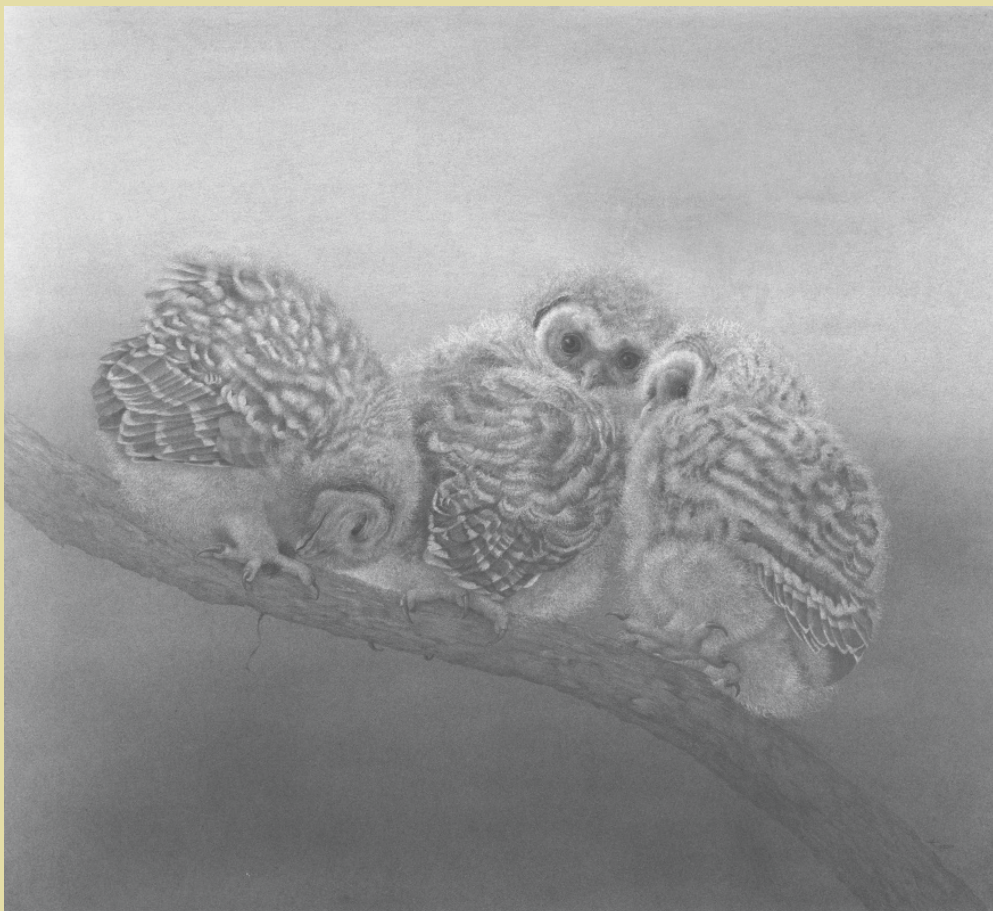
"Gotcha!" Tricolored Heron, 12" x 6", acrylic on board

I had watched this heron hunting and feeding for a few hours, and became fascinated with the water ripples as the bird moved forward. Painting this would be a challenge - keeping the water translucent and giving each of the ripples volume, the splashing water drops, and of course, the bird. But as I choose my subjects as much for the challenge of how to execute the subject as the subject itself this was one I was up for.



Belted Kingfisher, 12" x 9", acrylic on board

In contrast, this painting is about the bird; the background is indicated in a very simplistic manner and not all that important, the bird is what I want the viewer to focus on.



Branching - Fledgling Barred Owls, "22 x 20", graphite on Fabriano Artistico 300lb paper

As this nesting hole had been used in previous years we knew to watch it closely. In March, the parents were coming and going regularly throughout the day. Then one by one the fledglings came out to sit on the branch. They stayed there feeding and moving about exercising their forming wings and eating the goodies the parents brought. Then they were gone, climbing up into the canopy. But I had been able to spend time observing these fascinating little creatures. Why graphite dust? It just seemed the right medium to describe the softness of their downy feathers.

Maricopa Audubon Society

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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 Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N 64th Street, Scottsdale, AZ (northwest corner of 64th Street and Oak Street, which is between Thomas Road and McDowell).

Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopaaudubon.org. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information

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

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert, Chandler or most of Mesa, 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 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 email chadd@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or email 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. Email to: *The Cactus Wren•dition* Editor, Gillian Rice: editor.wrendition@yahoo.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.

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Maricopa Audubon Board

PRESIDENT

Mark Larson

13585 N. 92nd Pl.
Scottsdale, AZ 85260-4333
Home: 480 474-4439
Cell: 480 310-3261
larsonwarren@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Robin Silver, MD

P O Box 1178
Flagstaff, AZ 86002-1178
Phone: 602 799-3275
FAX: 928 222-0077
rsilver@biologicaldiversity.org

SECRETARY

Mary Rose

28161 N Varnum Rd
Queen Creek, AZ 85143
Phone: 602 999-7828
mary@chirpingcentral.com

TREASURER

Matt VanWallene, CPA

11004 E Villa Park St
Chandler, AZ 85248
Cell: 480 204-1104
vanwallene@gmail.com

FIELD TRIPS

Larry Langstaff

416 W. McNair St.
Chandler, AZ 85225
480 710-0431
Larrylangstaff1@gmail.com

PUBLICITY

Vicki Hire

PO Box 603
Chandler, AZ 85244
Cell (602) 463-9219
vicki.hire@gmail.com

CONSERVATION

Robert Witzeman

4619 E. Arcadia Ln.
Phoenix, AZ 85018
Phone: 602 840-0052
FAX: 602 840-3001
witzeman@cox.net

PROGRAMS

Laurie Nessel

1632 E. Cedar St.
Tempe, AZ 85281
480 968-5614
laurienessel@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP

Scott Burge

8869 S. Myrtle Ave.
Tempe, AZ 85284
Work: 480 968-5141
Home: 480 897-8608
Cell: 480 227-3965
FAX: 480 345-7633
burge@burgenvm.com

EDUCATION

Carol Langdon

2002 E. Ocotillo Rd.
Phoenix, AZ 85016
Home: 602 234-2006
Cell: 602 359-2951
clangdon2@cox.net

EDITOR

Gillian Rice

602 375-8831
editor.wrendition@yahoo.com

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