



The Cactus Wrendition

January - February 2001

This page contains several articles from the July August 2000 Cactus Wrendition, the newsletter of the Maricopa Audubon Society. Not all articles are reproduced on this page. Fieldtrip information, recent rare-bird sightings, meeting programs/schedules, and general chapter information are presented elsewhere in this site.

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Notes and Announcements

Morro Coast Audubon Society in San Luis Obispo County, CA will be holding their 5th co-sponsored **Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival** January 12-15, 2001. Last year's festival counted 201 species, including both land and water birds. Kenn Kaufman will be the main speaker. There will be over 40 different Field trips and Workshops. Morro Bay is located on the coast between Los Angeles and San Francisco. For more information check out their web site at www.morro-bay.net/birds or call Morro Bay C of C 800/231-0592.

The ABA Annual Convention will be held in Beaumont, Texas on April 18-24, 2001. You can join birders from all over the country for spring migration on the Upper coast of Texas plus workshops, programs, and a chance to network with other birders. For costs and information call 800/850-2473.

MAS photographers Jim Burns and Rich Ditch have photos in **Kenn Kaufman's** new field guide, "**Birds of North America.**" Jim has written a review of Kenn's book for this issue and next issue we'll run Rich's review of **David Sibley's "The Sibley Guide to Birds."**

Field Trip Leaders: I would like to encourage you to write up your field trips. I am sure MAS members would like to hear about what was seen.

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your **submissions** to the Editor—Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those to me directly.

Becoming a Birder

Jody Humber

Last summer when we returned from our trip to Alaska with an ABA area list of 678 birds, birding in our summer home in the White Mountains of Arizona appeared rather a boring prospect. Other than the elusive Flammulated Owl (heard but not seen) we had no prospect of new lifers, so what's to do?

I started with the checklist put out by White Mountain Audubon of the birds of the area. I counted all summer residents that weren't rare or accidental and decided to learn more about my 152 local birds. I confess up to now I'd been pretty much of a bird by sight check em off and run birder. Maybe that's my type A personality but one of the reasons I chose birding was my desire to slow down, relax and simply enjoy nature. I thought about our first "birding vacation" which was a VENT trip with Kenn Kaufman called "Introduction to Birding" in November of 1998. Yes, we got 72 lifers in five days but the best memory of all was the 20 minutes we spent watching an American Avocet feed in a tide pool less than 20 feet from us on a beautiful Texas afternoon. At that time I had no idea who Kenn was but he enjoyed the experience as much or more than any of us novices. I remember one of his assignments - look at a familiar bird and see what new things you could see that were new to you. I studied and observed a Great Blue Heron and picked out a dozen new things I'd never noticed before. I learned a lot those five days but what stuck out the most were Kenn's love, appreciation and fascination with simple common birds. I later purchased and read his three books and continue to enjoy his articles in birding magazines.

This past summer I've re-kindled my novice memories and really began to enjoy the local birds. For example, near our summer home you can find seven woodpeckers and given a good look I could identify all seven. What I hadn't done was to learn - really learn the birds. To start, I got the Stokes new CD, bird sounds of the west and listened to the calls of the five woodpeckers and two sapsuckers. It didn't take long until I knew the "wick-er" notes of the Northern Flicker, the "waka" call of the Acorn Woodpecker, the drumming of the Hairy Woodpecker and the "pik" call of the Downy Woodpecker. I was surprised to learn birding by ear is more powerful than by sight. It appears I hear twice as many birds as I actually see. I also know what I'm looking for when I hear it and that frees me up to really study whatever the bird I find is doing. I've learned a lot about bird territory, behavior, habits and mannerisms. Birds are more than a checkmark on a life list; they are beautiful, interesting and intelligent animals. I'm half way through the checklist in learning to bird by ear and I've purchased two more CD's to help me learn more about bird songs, calls, and note sounds. That alone is a fascinating subject, a hobby most type A listers never slow down to enjoy. I've also learned a great deal about habitat, plants, life zones and where the different birds spend their time. It's fascinating to learn different species spending time in different parts of a tree. Junco's for example at least the gray-headed race we have in the summer really stick to the ground. They don't even come to our feeders on the second story of our condo. Our chickadees seem to spend the most time in the middle of the trees while the Hepatic Tanagers are tree toppers. When I hear the Tanager I've learned to look up, way up to where they spend time.

For you type A's I have good news. These new habits and skills will not only increase your pleasure they'll improve your life list. Visiting our son in LA we got two new lifers. A White-headed Woodpecker I would never have seen without birding by ear skills and looking nine floors up into the pines of the San Gabriel Mountains. Bird number two, a Purple Finch, a bird of the under story was spotted by looking in the right place despite its silence. It is fun and relaxing to become an intermediate birder with lots more to learn and master at home it makes the 700th ABA bird a lot less urgent and important.

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Charge of the Birding Brigade

Herb Fibel

1

Half a mile, half a mile,

Half a mile southward,

All in the Valley of Gila

Rode the field trip dozen

"Forward the birding brigade!

Ignore the guns!" Herb said,
Into the Valley of Gila
Rode the field trip dozen.

2

"Forward the birding brigade!"
Was there a birder dismay'd?
Not tho' the participants knew
MAS had blunder'd.
There's not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to search the sky.
Into the Valley near Arlington
Rode the field trip dozen.

3

Dove hunters to right of them,
Dove hunters to left of them,
Dove hunters in front of them
Volley'd and thunder'd;
Storm'd at with shot and shell,
Boldly they birded and well,
Into the jaws of death
Into the mouth of hell
Rode the field trip dozen.

4

Flash'd all their binocular lenses,
Flash'd as they challeng'd their senses,
Avoiding the gunners there,
Dodging the dove hunters army, while
Auduboners wonder'd,
White-tailed kites obscured by the smoke
LeConte's thrashers startingly awoke
Hérons and egrets
Using the marsh as a cloak

Stayed covered but silently ponder'd.
The birders relinquished their quest,
When their leader said: "Discretion is best!"
As with shot and pellet they were pepper'd.

5

Dove hunters to the right of them,
Dove hunters to the left of them,
Dove hunters behind them now
Still volley'd and thunder'd.
Stormed at with with shot and shell
White-wing season's a birder's hell
Thankfully all lived to reflect and tell.
The whole dozen birders alive and well.
Left a sigh of relief as they wonder'd

6.

When would the memories fade?
For their dedication they'd heavily paid
Back home insurers and families wonder'd
Whether ever another trip would be planned
To Arlington and Gillespie Dam land
On the weekend dove hunting start'd

(Author's note: For the reasons listed above, the Arlington Valley field trip was cancelled. My abject and total apologies to Alfred Lord Tennyson)

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**A Review of Kenn Kaufman's New
Field Guide, North American Birds**

Over the past two decades we have given field guides to perhaps two dozen non-birding relatives, friends, and co-workers whom we thought might become birdwatchers because they evinced some interest in our special interest. Not a single one has become hooked. It's now a family joke that if we find someone with potential we don't dare give them a field guide for fear of turning them off. Kenn Kaufman's latest book, Birds of North America, published by Houghton Mifflin this fall as the first in a new series of "focus guides" may change all that.

Kenn, arguably the best “field birder” in North America before that term had any meaning, became hooked so early in his life he almost never got a life. He has gone on to a career as author, artist, and field guide. The same ordered and analytical mind which led him to discover and verbalize for us dummies the discernible differences in *Empidonax* Flycatchers, has dictated a better way to organize and present bird identification for newcomers and confused initiates—groupings of visually similar birds presented in photographs which he has digitally enhanced to best highlight the one or two best field marks of each species.

The very first book I ever opened to help me put a name on a bird I had seen was arranged by color. Don’t try to figure out how old that makes me and don’t try to use such a book to identify a female Blue Grosbeak. Kenn has always been about shape and structure and, though an accomplished bird artist, has always been aware of the advantages photographs can offer over drawings.

I love the Pictorial Table of Contents which opens his book. It detours the novice around the potholes and red lights of inexplicable taxonomy, weird common names and incomprehensible scientific names and immediately places the focus on shape and habitat. This leads, via color coding, to family groupings.

Pages 7 through 11, the first part of the introduction which Kenn labels Birding Basics, should be a mandatory insert into every box of new binoculars and should probably be reread any time a birder walks out the door.

One of the best features of the book is the short synopses which appear at the top of nearly every left-hand page under the family or group title. Concise and relevant, they give the reader spot-on insights into comparative field marks and behavioral habits, fascinating glimpses into ornithological history, and some of the flavor of Kenn’s droll, accessible literary style, this latter being no mean feat for a field guide. Did you know the “p” in ptarmigan is silent (not when you started, you didn’t); did you know that kids’ kites were named after the bird group, not conversely (you do now); do you know why you never see swifts on the wires with swallows (probably not)?

Another major asset of the book is the paired pages of introductory information about families and groups of birds which are of special interest or notorious difficulty. Gulls, birds of prey, and shorebirds are examples, and there are explanations of plumage variation, migratory patterns, and flight jizz.

Criticism of Birds of North America which I have heard falls into two categories. One revolves around the use of photographs and the computer editing of those photographs. Here’s a quote from Roger Tory Peterson himself who, unbeknown to many, was an avid bird photographer. “Whereas a photograph can have a living immediacy, a good drawing is more instructive as a teaching device.” My compliments to Kenn for seizing upon new computer technology to blend together the advantages of the two media. We all should realize that details in a photograph, even or perhaps especially an aesthetically pleasing one, can be misinterpreted due to the vagaries of film type, available light, etc. Digital manipulation can alleviate many if not all of these problems. Yes, these are “doctored” photographs. Kenn states this right up front. Even the “purest” of art photographers should agree that a basic field guide is a proper venue for computer enhancement.

A second level of criticism for Birds of North America has come from advanced birders disappointed the new book hasn’t gone far enough, hasn’t tapped deeply enough into Kenn’s vast knowledge, hasn’t “advanced” the science of bird identification. This criticism is off the mark since it was never Kenn’s intention with this book to add to his invaluable 1990 Peterson Field Guide, Advanced Birding.

Would I take this book into the field with me? No, but I’ve been birding for 30 years, I’ve memorized all of Kenn’s previous books, and shame on me I never take any book into the field anymore. Would I buy this book? I already have. I’ve found the top-of-the-left-page notes wonderful armchair reading, the comparative bird group sections a handy reference, and the color coding combined with the Peterson style “arrows” a quick and easy way to check and/or refresh my memory on ID details.

And I anticipate buying several more copies. I have a friend with a second home in Flagstaff. He’s seeing birds there and getting curious. He described a “brightly colored bird” that hung around his property all summer. With some trepidation I tossed him the Kaufman book, cold with no explanation, and told him to put a label on his bird. As I watched every move on his face, he hit the Table of Contents, pursed his lips for a couple of minutes, then started smiling and riffed through the color keys to the end of the “songbirds.” In three minutes flat he told me it was either a grosbeak or an oriole and if he had had this book in the field with him he could have told me for sure. Precisely the point! This book is going to either hook or help everyone but the most jaded experts.

I too hope Kenn Kaufman writes many sequels to Advanced Birding. I wish the colors in his new book had printed up more vibrantly and the computer enlarging hadn’t rendered some plumages “muddy.” I wish the color coding could have been just a little more systematically done, all

backgrounds in one family the same as one another and a shade of the color key itself. These are cavils. Buy two copies of this book. Use one yourself and give the other to a friend trying to get started. Both of you are going to love it. It's truly a "hand" book, very compact, fitting easily into an outer pocket. Get the cover laminated. Take it with you every time. Over the next two decades you're both going to beat it to death.

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Grazing Threatens Arizona's Wildlife

Bob Witzeman

"Do we really have to destroy tomorrow in order to live today?" – a 10-year-old fifth-grader asked ex-Senator Gaylord Nelson of Wisconsin.

Some 116 faunal species in Arizona are listed as threatened or endangered by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) in their publication: Wildlife of Special Concern in Arizona," draft, Dec. 13, 1996. ; Of these 116 species AGFD cited cattle grazing as one of the factors in the imperilment of 56 of those species. Introduction of exotic fish, crayfish, and bullfrogs, not just cows, have also played major roles in species imperilments here. ; In addition, your conservation chair has included 12 fish and 5 herps omitted by AGFD.

While some of these 116 species may be common elsewhere, their status and survival as a species in Arizona is the reason for their inclusion. The habitat of many Arizona amphibians, reptiles and native fish has been devastated by cattle in the past. ; Ironically, today, cattle tanks and water catchments allow some species to eke out a survival. ; This is like the hit-and-run driver providing intensive care, life support for their comatose victim.

Grazing as an impact in endangerment of 23 out of 29 of Arizona's T&E listed avian species:

1. American Bittern - "riparian overgrazing" p.24, AGFD
2. Least Bittern - "riparian overgrazing" p. 24, AGFD
3. Bald Eagle "loss of...riparian...habitats [from overgrazing]" p. 25, AGFD
4. Swainson's Hawk - "grazing practices" p. 26, AGFD
5. Ferruginous H. - "prairie dog control programs" by ranchers p. 26, AGFD
6. Northern Aplomado Falcon – EXTIRPATED "reduce cattle grazing" p. 26, AGFD
7. Masked Bobwhite – EXTIRPATED "overgrazing" p. 27, AGFD
8. Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo "overgrazing" p. 28, AGFD
9. Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl "manage grazing" p 28, AGFD
10. Elegant Trogon – "riparian and adjacent slope grazing" p. 29, AGFD
11. Green Kingfisher – "upland grazing" p. 29, AGFD
12. SW Willow Flycatcher – "overgrazing in riparian habitats" 30, AGFD
13. Buff-breasted Flycatcher - "fire suppression" [due to overgrazing] p.30, AGFD
14. Thick-billed Kingbird – "overgrazing" p. 30, AGFD
15. Rose-throated Becard – "overgrazing" p. 31, AGFD
16. Azure Bluebird – "overgrazing" p. 31, AGFD
17. Veery – "riparian overgrazing" p. 31, AGFD
18. Swainson's Thrush – "riparian grazing" p. 31, AGFD
19. Gray Catbird – "overgrazing by livestock" p. 32, AGFD
20. Sprague's Pipit – "overgrazing" p. 32, AGFD

21. Baird's Sparrow – "overgrazing" p. 32, AGFD
22. Arizona Grasshopper Sparrow – "reduce cattle grazing" p. 33, AGFD
23. Five-striped Sparrow – "overgrazing of slopes & canyons" 33, AGFD

Logging, by comparison, impacts only 3 out of 29 of Arizona's T&E avian species:

1. Goshawk - "removal of large...trees...timber management." p. 25, AGFD
2. Mexican Spotted Owl – "timber harvest" p. 29, AGFD
3. Thick-billed Parrot – "logging" p. 28, AGFD

Grazing as an impact in endangerment of 21 out of 25 of Arizona's T&E listed Native Fish:

1. ; Mexican Stoneroller "habitat loss and degradation due to overgrazing" p. 9, AGFD
2. Yaqui Shiner "habitat loss and degradation due to overgrazing" p. 9, AGFD
3. ; Sonora Chub "Channel degradation, siltation, and water pollution by overgrazing" p. 10, AGFD
4. ; Gila Chub - W.L. Minckley
5. ; Yaqui Chub "habitat loss and degradation due to overgrazing" p. 11, AGFD
6. ; Roundtail Chub W.L. Minckley
7. ; Virgin Chub W.L. Minckley
8. ; Roundtail Chub W.L. Minckley
9. ; Virgin Chub W.L. Minckley
10. Virgin Spinedace W.L. Minckley
11. Little Colorado Spinedace W.L. Minckley
12. Spikedace W.L. Minckley
13. Loach Minnow W.L. Minckley
14. Yaqui Sucker "habitat loss and degradation due to overgrazing" p. 14, AGFD
15. Yaqui Catfish EXTIRPATED "habitat degradation due to overgrazing" p. AGFD
16. Apache Trout "erosion, sedimentation" [grazing a factor] p. 15, AGFD
17. Gila Trout "erosion, sedimentation" [grazing a factor] p. 16, AGFD
18. Quitobaquito Pupfish W.L. Minckley
19. Gila Topminnow W.L. Minckley
20. Yaqui Topminnow "habitat loss and degradation due to overgrazing" p. 17, AGFD
21. Monkey Springs Pupfish EXTINCT, W.L. Minckley

Grazing as a factor in the endangerment of 10 of Arizona's 20 T&E listed herpetiformes:

1. Plains Leopard Frog F.J. Welsh
2. Chiricahua Leopard Frog F.J. Welsh
3. Northern Leopard Frog F.J. Welsh
4. Lowland Leopard Frog F.J. Welsh

5. Desert Tortoise “overgrazing” p. 25, AGFD
6. Arizona Striped Whiptail “encourage ranchers to maintain...habitat” p. 22, AGFD
7. Bunch Grass Lizard “disappears from sites that are heavily grazed” p. 22, AGFD
8. Ridgenose Rattlesnake “overgrazing” p. 23, AGFD
9. Massasauga “grazing reduction of bunchgrass cover” p. 23, AGFD
10. Mexican Garter Snake “loss of cienegas and...preferred wetland habitats” p. 23, AGFD

Grazing as a factor in the endangerment of 14 of Arizona’s 21 T&E listed mammals

1. Water Shrew “intense high elevation grazing along streambanks” p. 34, AGFD
2. Western Red Bat “loss of riparian and other broad-leaved deciduous forest due to trampling of stream banks and increased erosion associated with grazing...” p. 35, AGFD
3. Western Yellow Bat “degradation of riparian woodlands due to trampling of stream banks and increased erosion associated with grazing” p. 35, AGFD
4. Black-tailed Prairie Dog EXTIRPATED “by livestock industry” p. 36, AGFD
5. New Mexican Banner-tailed Kangaroo Rat “intense livestock grazing” p. 37, AGFD
6. Hualapai Mexican Vole “grazing” p. 37, AGFD
7. Navajo Mexican Vole “grazing by livestock” p. 37, AGFD
8. Mesquite Mouse “livestock grazing” p. 37, AGFD
9. Meadow Jumping Mouse “intense livestock grazing” p. 38, AGFD
10. Mexican Wolf “extirpated...by livestock industry” p. 38, AGFD
11. Grizzly Bear “conflicts with humans and livestock industry” p. 38, AGFD
12. Black-footed Ferret “control programs...livestock industry” p. 39, AGFD
13. Jaguar “conflicts with livestock industry” p. 39, AGFD
14. Sonoran Pronghorn “livestock grazing” p. 39, AGFD

Grazing as a factor in the endangerment of 4 of Arizona’s 21 T&E listed invertebrates

1. Yavapai Mountain Snail “livestock grazing” p. 5, AGFD
2. Bylas Springsnail “livestock grazing” p. 6, AGFD
3. Grand Wash Springsnail “livestock use” p. 6, AGFD
4. Three Forks Springsnail “habitat degradation due to livestock” p. 7, AGFD

Summary:

23 out of 29 birds

21 out of 25 fish

10 out of 20 herpetiformes

14 out of 21 mammals

4 out of 21 invertebrates

72 out of 116 Arizona T&E species impacted by cattle grazing

Passing a law in Congress to allow voluntarily, market-priced retirement of federal public lands (BLM and USFS) grazing allotments is not far fetched. There are many willing sellers for this dying industry here in the arid West. The glorious beauty and re-wilding of our West can return. ; The 23 birds impacted by public lands cattle grazing here in Arizona could again find freedom. ; Our mountains, streams, and deserts can return to their former majesty and vitality.

Public lands grazing produces only 2% of the nation's beef. ; It does so at a net loss of some half a billion dollars annually to U.S. taxpayers. Hence, voluntary buy-out/retirement would save tax dollars. ; More beef is produced in Iowa than all the public lands in the West. ; Public lands grazing is a destructive anachronism whose time has past.

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'Cool' is a Relative Thing

Ann McDermott

The sixty degree breeze coming through the window of my bedroom at night...that was cool. The evening walk I took through a San Marcos, California neighborhood wearing a sweater bummed from my mother...that was cool. The sixty-eight degree ocean water splashing up around my ankles as I strolled the beach...that was cool. The brochure advertised "three guided field trips to cool Arizona mountains and canyons" we visited as part of Vanessa's ornithology class...they were not cool...except in comparison to Phoenix. Cool is a relative thing.

I took Vanessa's [Introduction to Ornithology](#) this past July and enjoyed it very much. She was amazingly organized. It was obvious that she worked very hard to pull together the materials and birding trips that would expose us to the richest experiences in the short amount of time we would have together—four weekends. Maps were provided for each field trip and the ASU West campus, where we had two lectures and a dissection lab. Each field trip was carefully planned and scheduled, yet she was flexible and adjusted that schedule to suit the energy, physical abilities, and birding experience of her students. I learned a great deal from the hand-outs and lectures, which were condensed, but good compliments to the lectures.

Avian anatomy and physiology, while subject to only one weekend of study, was really quite fascinating. The respiratory system is truly amazing, and I recommend it as an evolutionary improvement we humans might consider as a means of increasing our capacity for physical exertion and ability to float in a swimming pool. Having made that adjustment, we might as well progress through some of the birds' variations on skeletal changes too. Who knows? Maybe we'll finally reach the stage where we actually realize that dream man has harbored since the beginning of time... that of being able to fly.

The evolutionary changes birds made in progressing from reptile-like to avian form were the subject of another weekend lecture, along with an explanation of the scientific classification of birds, from kingdom to phylum and beyond. I gained a much better understanding of the terminology involved in patterns of geographic distribution of birds too.

Avian behavior and life cycles were the subject of another lecture. Migration, territorial behavior, dominant behavior and flocking were discussed. I learned territoriality tends to be the life-style where there are stable, defensible food resources. Flocking is associated with unstable and indefensible food resources.

The weekend spent studying bird reproduction was especially interesting. I already knew that copulation in some species of snakes takes several hours. I discovered most birds complete the process in only one to two seconds. It occurs to me that some students of nature might not consider this to be a developmental advancement on the part of birds as they evolved from their reptilian-related forbearers.

In the discussion of a clutch, "the number of eggs a bird lays in one set," we learned about determinate layers and indeterminate layers, neither of which has anything to do with geological layers or the strata of a parfait. Determinate layers are birds which lay a specific number of eggs per nesting. Indeterminate layers are birds which will lay extra eggs if some are removed from the nest during incubation. In 1939, a man (no gentleman) by the name of Bent, experimented with a Northern Flicker, an indeterminate layer. He induced her to lay 71 eggs in 73 days, hardly a natural occurrence. He fed her a special diet so that she would be able to produce so many eggs, hardly a natural diet. I'm not sure what scientific or ethical justification this experiment might have had to Bent or natural science. I leave that to be worked out between Bent and a

certain female Northern Flicker. (You can probably guess whose side I'm on.)

I was also quite astounded to learn that 90% of bird species are monogamous. This is because monogamy is defined as biparental rearing of young in a relationship which may last for a season or a lifetime, whatever the genetic paternity of the broods may be. It has nothing to do with fidelity. By this definition, Bill Clinton is monogamous too. By his own definition, he may not have even had sex since creating Chelsea. Who knows? If Hilary shares the same definition of monogamy, Bill may not even be answerable for that. Whole arenas of speculation opened up for me based on this definition of monogamy. My dictionaries defined it as mono (one), gamos (marriage), from the Greek. One, no doubt archaic, mentioned something about sexual fidelity. Since birds are not known practitioners of either marriage or Greek, I suggest that there might be another term which would more accurately describe how 90% of bird species live.

I enjoyed the field trips very much, even though I didn't find them to be cool. The first was to several locations in the Prescott area and nearby Chino Valley. We did not overnight on this trip. Daytime temperatures in the 90's and hiking much of the time in the sun ensured me plenty of sweat and not very much cool. Still, we saw some nice birds and wonderful terrain.

The second field trip was an overnighter. We stayed in the Sierra Anchas Research Station, a rustic, but comfortable accomodation in the entrance to the south fork of Parker Creek. Friday night we stayed, a dozen to a two story cabin with plenty of sleeping quarters and one bathroom. I made frequent visits to the great outdoors and thus avoided the lines before and after meals, and before and after bedtime. If we could have had a 50 MPH breeze straight out of Alaska, the night's sleep might have been cool. Unfortunately, we had no breeze, and Alaska is a long way off. Still, Saturday's hike was in beautiful country and gave us a good number of bird species. And plenty of bear scat, but only scat. We sighted no bears.

The third field trip we were out over two nights, both at Brown Canyon, about the most beautiful example of Sonoran desert I've ever seen. In the shadow of Baboquivari Peak, we hiked a trail to a natural rock archway, between hills covered with lush, fully-leafed ocotillo forests and barrel cactus in glorious red blossom. We passed along a streambed that actually had a little water in it, feeling most privileged to be birding this extrodinarily healthy habitat. Both nights we stayed in a ranch house, where each bed had a quilt (totally unnecessary, but they looked wonderful) and pillows that seemed brand new, not to mention the four bathrooms that kept lines to a minimum. But not once in the entire weekend did my hair and scalp dry out. I sweat non-stop. Some chose to sleep outside on the huge porches that graced the house, under the stars...and under the rain clouds that blew in both nights. I'd have thought those winds, fierce, but brief, would have cooled off the house more, but no. Cool was not to be found. No matter how well we all liked each other, and we did, I'm sure we would have liked each other a lot less by the end of the weekend had we not had so many shower facilities available to us.

After our second night at Brown Canyon, we stopped at Madera Canyon for a few hours, where many got great looks at a Elegant Trogon and an immature Cooper's Hawk lunching on a small bird. Our short hike yielded between 30 and 40 different species, and not a shred of coolness. We did all get acquainted, or reacquainted, with another great birding locale, however.

This is a wonderful class, notable for organization, field trips to lovely locations, interesting lectures and the fact that the instructor is not above using wine as a reinforcer. At \$125 for the class, and \$30 for accomodations on the field trips, it is a deal that can't be beat. I recommend it to anyone as a great introduction to ornithology, whatever your level of birding expertise. The only thing I can't recommend it for is coolness, the weather being something that even Vanessa can't organize.

(I nearly forgot. We did have our brush with coolness. The nights we met in the labroom of ASU West were so cold none of the specimens would even think of decomposing, so be advised to bring a sweater or ski jacket to those.)

Sign up early for next summer's class by contacting Vanessa Montgomery at 623-465-0012 or vmontgomeryaz@yahoo.com and mark your calendar for a wonderful learning experience.

As for "cool"...I've decided that's a relative thing...something I'll experience in July only while visiting relatives in California.

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The Name Game

Barb Winterfield

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"I just don't know how you keep all these names straight." I spoke to my husband as I thumbed through his well worn Western Birds field guide. He had been interested in birding for some time, and I was trying to see what all the fuss was about.

"It's not too hard. Most are very descriptive." My husband turned the page of the paper he was reading, and stretched his legs out in front of him.

I nodded my head, but was skeptical, "Ferruginous Hawk." I read aloud. "Rufous above, whitish below." I looked to him. "What color is rufous?"

"Same color as ferruginous." he helpfully pointed out and returned his attention to his paper.

"Yes. And what color would ferruginous be?" I repeated the question, suspicious that he didn't know the answer either.

He thought for a moment before replying. "Red, like the color of rust. It must come from Ferrous, meaning to have iron. You know, Iron is Fe on the periodic table."

Yes, my husband was a Chemical Engineer, he would know that. "So the bird is rust colored on top and white below. Why didn't they just say that."

"I believe they did." my husband pointed out.

I looked out our plate-glassed window to the bird feeder hanging from the shade tree in the front yard. An Inca Dove feasted on the seeds that were being dumped to ground by the White-Winged Dove swinging on the feeder. Being around my husband, I had learned a few of the more common species in our area. I continued to read his field guide.

"Curve-billed Thrasher. Desert thrasher with a well curved bill. Why did they call it a thrasher?"

"Because it uses its bill in a trashing motion to dig up the bugs that are under the leaves." my husband set his paper down on the end-table, and used a curved-down finger to mimic the back and forth motion.

That one was too easy for him. I was going to have to dig a little deeper if I was going to stump him with any of my questions. "Bridled Titmouse. Has a crest, and black and white bridled face." I just turned to my husband and said, "explain."

"Bridled, like a bridle you would place on a horse." Seeing my quizzical expression, he continued. "The facial marks on the Titmouse looks similar to the marks a bridle makes on a horse."

"And the name Titmouse." I giggled.

"It is a very small bird. It's the species name, like the Blue Tits in Europe." He didn't even blush.

Then I came across a very funny name for a bird. This one couldn't possible be descriptive. "Killdeer."

"That's the call it makes." my husband sat up a little straighter, I had his full attention now. He cleared his throat as if to begin an operatic song. "Kill-deer, Kill-deer, Kill-deer." he did a very good imitation of a call that I had heard often times near the lakes close to our home.

I was impressed. "Ruddy Turnstone." I shook my head, not understanding that description.

"Ruddy, is a color of red, Turnstone, it turns over rocks looking for food."

"Ferruginous, rufous, ruddy." I ticked them off on my fingers, "All colors of red."

"Various shades of red and reddish-brown. They also use names like rosy, red, rose, vermilion, scarlet, hepatic, ruddy, ruby, chestnut, and cinnamon." He was tiring of my game, and stood to stretch.

"Hepatic?" that was a color I had not heard of. I had heard of the others, including vermilion, like the reddish-colored cliffs in Northern Arizona.

"It actually means, like the liver. It's a reddish-brown color like a liver." he explained.

I wasn't sure how he knew that, but I was willing to trust him. I crinkled my nose at the description. "And what bird gets the unfortunate honor of looking like a liver?"

My husband laughed. "It doesn't look like a liver, it's just the color of a liver. The Hepatic Tanager."

"Ladder-backed Woodpecker." I began firing them off quickly. Afraid he was going to leave the room before I could stump him.

"Has black and white stripes on the back, like a ladder."

"Mourning Dove."

"Has a very mournful call."

"Lazuli Bunting."

"Lapis lazuli is a deep-blue gemstone." he walked over near my chair and reached down to touch one of my sapphire earrings. "I would have expected you to know that."

"How many colors of blue are used?" I knew about the Bluebird. Was it like red, did they have several names?

"Let me see." He thought about it for a while. "There's the Blue Jay, Indigo Bunting, Lazuli Bunting, Cerulean Warbler, Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher, and Violet-Green swallow."

He was right, they were all descriptive. I just didn't understand all the terms. I thumbed through the field guide less enthusiastically now. But

then I saw it. I had seen several but it hadn't occurred to me until now. "Anna's Hummingbird." I declared triumphantly.

"It's a Hummingbird with a red head and throat." He smiled back.

"But the name Anna's doesn't describe the bird does it?"

"No. It was named by the first person who saw it, and he named it after the Duchess Anna Massena, wife of the Duke of Rivoli. The Duke had a hummingbird named for him as well, the Rivoli's Hummingbird, but it was later changed to Magnificent Hummingbird. Very romantic don't you think, having a couple of hummingbirds named after a husband and wife?" He leaned down and kissed me.

We smiled as we held hands and looked out the window at the birds that gathered at our feeder.

NOTE: There are about 90 species of North American birds that are named for people. I personally would like to see the names of these species changed to be more descriptive.

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