



The Cactus Wrendition

March – April 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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Nominating Committee: It's that time of year again. Our annual board elections will be held at the Annual Banquet and Meeting on May 1st, and a Nominating Committee has already been formed. If you are interested in stepping forward and in assuming a leadership role in your chapter in the coming fiscal year which starts June 1st, please call one of the following Nominating Committee members and let him or her know of your interest:

Evelyn Lewis, Chairman (480) 990-0415

Harvey Beatty (480) 991-9190

Roy Jones (480) 994-9386

Audubon Adventures: Give the gift of discovery and share your love of the environment. The program is designated for students in grades 4-6. Introduce an entire classroom (up to 32 students) to the wonders of nature for just \$35 (plus shipping charges). You can select your favorite school or let Audubon do it for you. For orders: call 800/813-5037.

Lead birdwalks or discuss migration and bird counts to boy and girl scouts working on their environmental badges at the **Gilbert Water Ranch** on March 24, noon-3:00 p.m.. Call Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@hotmail.com.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park – Visit here today between 7:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and enjoy a special event to welcome back the buzzards (Turkey Vultures to us). Park staff will lead bird walks and rescued birds, mammals and reptiles will be on display. The arboretum is located just west of Superior on US 60. There is a park entry fee. Bring a lunch. Cake and refreshments available. The park is largely handicapped accessible. Call Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum for information at 520/689-2811 or visit their website at <http://ag.arizona.edu/bta/btsa.html>.

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.

Maricopa Audubon Birdathon, April 2001. This fundraising event features teams of birders who try to identify as many species as possible in a 24 hour period. Each team raises money by obtaining donation pledges per species seen. Prizes will be awarded for various birding feats. If you'd like to be a team leader, team member, or organizing committee member, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614, laurienessel@hotmail.com.

Yuma Birding and Nature Festival: This year's festival will be held April 19-22. The headquarters will be in the Shilo Inn where registration will be held beginning at noon on the 19th of April. The Festival will have seminars, tours and special events. For more information please contact them at <http://yumabirding.org> or 520/376-6113.

Volunteer Opportunities: Tend a booth, lead a birdwalk or give a talk at the International Migratory Bird Festival at the Phoenix Zoo May 12 & 13. Celebrate the return of millions of birds from their wintering grounds in Central and South America. Help educate the public about the extraordinary phenomenon of migration and how they can help. Increase awareness of the importance of shade grown coffee in preserving habitat. Contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 laurienessel@hotmail.com

NEW Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts are available for sale at member meetings or by mail. They feature a Barn Owl primary flight feather overshadowing the common and Latin names of birds found in Maricopa County. Short sleeved shirts are available in Iris, Brick, Charcoal and Willow, large or XL for \$15.00. Long-sleeved shirts are available in Charcoal, Med, Large or XL, for \$20.00. Add \$4.00 shipping and handling for the first shirt, \$1.50 for each additional shirt. Please allow 3 weeks for delivery. Make checks out to: Maricopa Audubon Society, 1128 E. Geneva Dr., Tempe, Az 85282. For info, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614, laurienessel@hotmail.com. Look for a future posting of the shirts on our website: <http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>.

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.

The Web: The web site putting travelling birders in touch with each other all over the world has just been improved to make it easier to use. In North America you can find contacts in 57 states and provinces and if you travel overseas, find contacts in all major countries in Europe, The Middle East, Asia and South America as well as Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. Bookmark the new improved <http://www.birdingpal.com> and meet a fellow birder next time you travel.

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. I want to give everyone plenty of notice about a change in deadline for the July-August issue. Jim and I have a date with an Ivory Gull in the Arctic in mid-June, so I must move the **June 1 deadline back to May 25**. Thanks..

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Birder's Dreams And Reality

Jason Berry

Director, GBRC

<http://xelapages.com/gbrc>

Birder's often dream of birding far away, exotic destinations for vacation. After one realizes this dream, and is blown away by the birding, one starts to dream about living in one of these birding paradises. As your average, run-of-the-mill, Joe birders, I too dreamed these dreams while I typed away at the office. Unfortunately, for most of us the reality is often much less thrilling. But in 1999 all my dreams came true!

My wife and I had to return to Guatemala for her to finish up medical school. I had lived there previously and had always wanted to return. My plan was to work with the local bird observatory, or Audubon Society. As it turned out there were no birding observatories, and the Audubon Society changed its name and affiliation with AS in the United States. I was lost!

In the United States I had enjoyed the support of the informal birdwatching infrastructure and community. I was standing in gorgeous Cloud forest, but with no one to debate the differences between the confusing female hummers. I was knee-high in a coastal marsh, but with no rarebird hotline to report the first country record of Fulvous whistling Duck! The lush montaine jungles of the pacific foothills teamed with resplendent Quetzals, Azure-rumped Tanagers, and Blue-tailed Hummingbirds, but who was I going to share this birding excitement with? In a word the birding infrastructure, community was NONEXISTENT! Then while looking at a particularly beautiful Pink-headed Warbler it came to me. Why not open Guatemala up to birding by creating an organization dedicated to catering to birder's needs?

Almost two years later with lots of hard work and birding behind me, no birder need visit Guatemala and feel as lost and disorientated as I did. The Guatemala Birding Resource Center now provides local (we found a few!) and visiting birdwatchers resources such as checklists, field guides, binoculars, a birder's resource library, tours, and information! Tours focus on Mundo Maya endemics, e.g. Horned Guan, Azrue-rumped Tanager, Rufous Saberwing, and Black-capped Sisikin. Proceeds from the tours go to support the work of two recently hired GBRC research associates who are researching life histories of the many unstudied birds of the country. This last high season saw more than three tours a week, countless rare bird sightings, and satisfied birders from all over the world. GBRC is a success - the dream came true!

Although most birders will never have the chance to found their own birding organization, there are many other ways to deepen your birding experience. Taking your interest in birding one step farther and volunteering for the Christmas and Spring bird counts can definitely enrich your birding. Taking on a little bit more may find you with your own Summer Breeding Bird Survey area, or banding birds on a birdy weekend in the fall. Volunteering for national or international conservation organizations can afford unimaginable birding experiences! My story isn't so much about Guatemala or GBRC, but that we birders can make our birding dreams come true if we if we take that next step! Who knows maybe the next Hermit or Worming-eating Warbler you band might be seen on one of our tours!

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Birding Southern Sonora, Mexico

Barb Winterfield

We sat among the leaf litter under the expansive canopy of a large fig tree, its shade providing cool relief from the intense morning sun. A Northern Parula and a Varied Bunting had been nibbling on the fruits directly over our heads no more than 5 minutes ago. A male Elegant Trogon was keeping us company, perched calmly on a limb about 5 feet away, its stunning reds and greens blending in perfectly with the deep green of the leaves of the tropical fig tree. From its wide-eyed gaze I guessed it was wondering what we were finding so fascinating this morning.

We were sitting as still as possible, because 2 large pheasant shaped birds were approaching. They meandered toward us, taking their time, seemingly unaware of our presence, clucking to each other. They continued to approach, deep in conversation with each other, 15 feet, 14 feet, 13 feet. We couldn't believe our luck. How could they not notice us? And still they came closer, 12 feet, and then 11 feet. Suddenly one reacted, and then both of the brown birds showed their reddish bellies as they erupted into a flight of feathers to put some distance between them and us. We all exhaled, our hearts racing. We had just gotten some of the greatest views we could ever hope for of Rufous-bellied Chachalaca.

"That's the best view I have ever had of those birds." Roy Jones was the first to break the silence. He was our leader on this 5-day birding trip down to the Southern portion of Sonora, Mexico. We knew he had traveled to this area about 15 times before, so if this view was special to this one-time president of the Maricopa Audubon Society, and excellent birder, we knew we had indeed experienced a rare treat.

My husband and I exchanged glances. That had been one more lifer for us. It was the first time we had been birding in Mexico, and this was the perfect place, just outside of Alamos, in the northern range of many of the Mexican species.

A flock of Purplish-backed Jays called and in groups of two or more at a time, flew into the canopy. Reminding me more of crows than jays, with their black bodies, yellow feet and eyes, it was their beautiful purple backs and tails that impressed me most. One member of the flock stood out, it was a juvenile and still had its bright yellow bill. They called to each other and moved about the tree gathering fruit until the Black-throated Magpie-Jays arrived. These large, magnificent jays were blue with a dark bib, high crest, and long elegant tail.

Across the water from us we could hear the mournful, slowly descending call of a Lesser Roadrunner. He seemed to be vocalizing our reluctance to leave the birding haven we had discovered. But we knew that we had seen about as many birds as we could expect at this spot, so the 5 of us brushed ourselves off and headed that way, back to our van.

On our return route, we hoped to see the dainty Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush again. We had seen one foraging at the foot of a nearby fig tree before we sat down, but it was nowhere to be found. We did glimpse a Streak-backed Oriole, hiding deep among the large, oblong, leaves. Several Plain-capped Starthroats zipped past us, hovering over the water, before finding the branch with just the perfect vantage point for them. Though I scanned the small Rio Cuchujaqui as we jumped across it, I was unable to find the two petite Green Kingfishers that we had seen perched on a dead snag at the water's edge on the walk in. I thought about the Elegant Quail and the Black-capped Gnatcatchers that we had seen on the drive in and wondered if we would glimpse them on our drive out.

When we reached our destination, the roadrunner continued its sad call, so we worked our way into the thorn forest; large hecho cacti, similar in shape and size to saguaros, standing proudly amongst tall thorny trees and bushes. We worked our way past a few bushes, and were surprised to see it perched on a branch, in the nook of a hecho, no more than 10 feet from us. It cocked its head to get a good look at us, but did not fly. We studied it for some time, the pale throat (its northern neighbor, the Greater Roadrunner, has a streaked throat), the spotted tail, and the overall body size. It wasn't frightened of us, and we took our time identifying and photographing it.

Roy was again impressed that we had had such a wonderful view of another hard-to-find bird. It was on that happy note that we clambered into the van and returned to the whitewashed homes and buildings in the small tourist town of Alamos. As Roy weaved in and out of the narrow brick-paved streets, we passed the major landmark in the city, the large mission in the center of town. He drove us past that and on to a nice city park, where we could relax under the trees and enjoy our picnic lunch.

As I smeared the peanut butter onto a slice of bread, movement overhead caught our group's attention. A small Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl had flown in and perched in a tall fig tree. I dropped the bread, grabbed my camera and tried to find the best view. It began calling repeatedly until a second one came to join him on the perch, no more than 6 inches away. The adorable, miniature owls called to each other for several minutes, entertaining us. As they turned their heads the small black spots on the back of their necks made it seem as if they could see us whether they were looking toward us or away. We were all quite thrilled. And this was only our first day of birding.

We had arrived the previous night, and had settled in to our "home base", a wonderful hotel in Navojoa, 33 miles west of Alamos. A welcoming committee of Sinaloa Crows and White-fronted Parrots greeted us as they came in to roost among a large stand of cottonwood trees, just across the street from our hotel. We took a walk along the nearby Rio Mayo, dry due to a 3-year drought; we found Social Flycatchers, Great Kiskadees, and Ruddy Ground-Doves. We had ended the evening, as we would every evening, by dining at the marvelous hotel restaurant. Every day we would get up early and venture out to a birding location, taking our breakfast and lunch on the road, to return to our "home base" and talk about the day's birds.

The days went by fast, and we spent as much time in the field as we could. For our final day of birding, our destination was a wildlife preserve along the coast, known as Estero Tobari, but there was a pleasant surprise for us along the way. A shallow lake had been formed in the middle of some farm fields. Here White-faced and White ibis threshed for food. Black-bellied and Fulvous whistling-ducks perched in trees, overlooking a large assortment of diving and dabbling ducks.

Having reached the preserve, we drove down a dirt road that was flanked by bushes and tidal flats. The first bird of interest that popped into view was the Mangrove Warbler, a sub-species of the Yellow Warbler with a bright chestnut head. He sang among the plants next to our car. Out on the mud flats a large array of shorebirds were feeding, including: Roseate Spoonbills, Reddish Egrets, and Tri-colored Herons. A Magnificent Frigatebird flew overhead. The well-named, very petite, Least Tern sailed by. Marbled Godwits, Whimbrels, and Long-billed Curlews probed their long bills into the mud.

As we drove further toward the coast, we crossed the causeway. The rocks on either side of the road were good resting spots for Ruddy and Black turnstones, and American Oystercatchers, whose red lipstick and red mascara rivaled that of any dance-hall girl. As we crossed over the boat access bridge, several Mangrove Swallows flew around us, tilting and diving on effortless wings, giving us perfect views of their white rumps and green faces (the distinguishing marks between them and Violet-green Swallows).

We crested over a sandy hill to see the Gulf of California, a vast expanse of blue. A strong wind blew, kicking up the fine sand. A Surfbird and some Sanderlings ran down near the water. We scanned for boobies, and shearwaters, but found none.

Having exhausted the coast that morning, we returned to the Alamos area that evening. Here we hiked near the Rio Mayo. Happy Wrens sang out, expressing what sounded like pure joy, before the pair showed themselves for several minutes. We hiked back into the mud cliffs of a wash where burrows had been dug into the sides. These burrows could be the nesting holes of motmots. Motmots, once found are very cooperative birds; they will remain in the same place for a long time, motionless. This behavior however, is exactly what makes them hard to find.

We hiked about the wash for some time, and we listened for their call. It was faint, but was that one in the distance? The search was on. We scanned the area along the sandy wash.

"There it is." My husband pointed out.

"Where?" I asked, even though it was directly in front of me, I could not find it. I wasn't the only one having difficulty tracking it down, but with lots of directions, at last I caught sight of him. And what a sight it was. Perched among many branches, was the impressive Russet-crowned Motmot. It was beautiful! It had a thick black bill, and a black cheek that outlined its namesake russet head. The russet crown crept over the head and gradually faded to green then blue. It had a black breast-pin spot on its greenish-white chest, and its tail hung down like two pendulums. It seemed not to notice us, and probably didn't know what a profound affect it had on all of us. We stood in awe and wonderment.

It was like finding a hidden treasure, a most fantastic finale to a fulfilling trip of birding. What a great way to spend a vacation, experiencing the beauty and wonder of nature.

Epilog:

Other birds of note that were seen on the trip: Least Grebe, Blue Mockingbird, Groove-billed Ani, White-tipped Dove, Red-billed Pigeon, Crested Caracara, Gray Hawk, Mexican Parrotlet, Sinaloa Wren, Black-vented Oriole, Nutting's Flycatcher, and Crane Hawk.

The Phoenix Zoo sponsored the trip. We stopped within Mexico, so each of us could fill-out the required tourist visa. A birth certificate and picture ID, or Passport could be used for identification. The car had to be registered for traveling in Sonora.

The road to Navojoa was a 4-lane toll road. Though narrow, the road was well maintained and we were able to travel at 80 kph. There were clean restrooms at most tollbooths. There were several checkpoints along the way, many were local police or military stops, and we were normally just waved on through. There is one checkpoint along the road between Navojoa and Alamos. All fruits are confiscated and burned due to a fruit fly quarantine.

We stayed at the Best Western in Navojoa. I recommend the food at the hotel's restaurant (in particular their Tortilla Soup). They provided bottled water at the restaurant and in our rooms every day. This is nice because it's best if you don't drink the water from the tap, or use it to brush your teeth.

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Teddy Roosevelt would have agreed

Wild beasts and birds are by right not the property merely of the people who are alive today, but the property of unborn generations whose belongings we have no right to squander.

—President Theodore Roosevelt

When I came to Arizona in 1958 it would have been unthinkable to believe logging on public lands would ever end. BLM and USFS logging today represents less than 5% of U.S. wood products consumption. The annual USFS cut now is a fraction of what it was a decade ago. More than 80% of U.S. wood products today come from private lands in the U.S. — mostly in the South. Whether the new Bush Administration will be successful in turning the clock back to the aggressive logging cuts of the Bush/Reagan years, remains to be seen.

Public lands grazing is under the same fire public lands logging was a decade or so ago. While conservation groups are seriously mobilizing opposition to this scourge, the flawed economics of the industry may be hastening its self-destruction.

Public lands grazing (BLM, USFS, NPS, NWR etc.) today produces only 2% of the nation's beef. Despite the huge subsidies to public lands grazing, more beef is produced in Iowa than on all the public lands in the West. This 2% comes at a taxpayer cost and resource damage to public lands amounting to an overall cost of about a half billion dollars annually.

Many environmentalists are now advocating congressional legislation allowing voluntary (willing-seller/willing buyer) retirement of federal public lands grazing permits. At the current market price of \$50-\$100 per animal unit month, the total pricetag for retiring all federal lands in the West would be about \$1.6 billion. Such a buy out would quickly pay for itself. This is because of the industry's costs due to (1) taxpayer subsidies, and (2) natural resource damages such as soil erosion, forest fires, and lost hunting, fishing and recreational revenues.

As you read in the last *Cactus Wren* edition, 23 of the 29 state-list threatened avian species in Arizona are impacted adversely by grazing according to the Arizona Game and Fish Department. By contrast, only three of those 29 threatened avian species are impacted by logging. Since public lands grazing occurs throughout most of Arizona, the benefit to wildlife and the environment would be immense.

Let us summarize what has become the single most pervasive and damaging activity on Western public lands.

1. Grazing has severely damaged western seeps, springs, creeks, rivers and lakes, the organisms in them and the vegetation around them.
2. Grazing has caused massive losses of western soils.
3. Public lands grazing promotes the replacement of native plants by invasive exotics and noxious weeds.
4. Public lands grazing is the single greatest contributor to the loss of biodiversity and the imperilment of threatened and endangered species in the West.
5. Livestock on public lands directly compete with wildlife, which is of far greater economic, ecological, and aesthetic value than domestic livestock.
6. Public lands grazing involves the killing, at taxpayer expense, of large numbers of wild animals every year, such as prairie dogs, coyotes, wolves, mountain lions, bears and bison, disrupting ecologically crucial predator/prey relations;
7. The Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service too often mismanage public lands to serve the livestock industry.
8. The continuance of public lands grazing requires massive subsidies from American taxpayers, who thereby finance the degradation or destruction of their own public lands;

The Arizona Grasshopper Sparrow, *Ammodrammus savannarum ammodrammus*, is an isolated, unique population of the Grasshopper Sparrow restricted primarily to southeastern Arizona and northern Sonora. Cattle grazing is one of the impacts this vulnerable population faces.

International Migratory Bird Day

On the second weekend of May, all over the country people will be celebrating International Migratory Bird Day. They will be celebrating the return of millions of migratory birds from their wintering grounds in South and Central America, Mexico, and the Caribbean to their North American breeding grounds. The goal of International Migratory Bird Day is to introduce these extraordinary long distance travelers to the public and to provide the public with an opportunity to learn what they can do to help preserve these birds and the habitats upon which they depend.

This year the Sonoran Joint Venture, Liberty Wildlife, and The Phoenix Zoo will be teaming up to sponsor a two day Migratory Bird Festival which will include presentations by migratory bird experts from Canada, Mexico, and the United States, conservation workshops, live bird shows, informational booths, bird walks, and lots of fun activities. The Migratory Bird Festival will take place on the weekend of May 12th and 13th at The Phoenix Zoo.

The Sonoran Joint Venture, Liberty Wildlife, and The Phoenix Zoo are inviting you to help us celebrate and support migratory bird conservation by participating in this years Migratory Bird Festival. This years special International Migratory Bird Day theme is the Coffee Connection, to raise consumer awareness to the loss of migratory and resident bird habitat to open sun-tolerant coffee plantations and the importance of supporting the production of shade grown coffee

Home or Genetics

Alison Steen McGowan

The Cowbirds

Lay their eggs

In the Towhee's nest

Then fly away.

The Towhees

Raise the fledging

Like their own

They feed it

And teach it their songs of

Traffic cop whistles.

But seem relieved

When off it flies singing

The trills of an opera singer

For blood remians

Thicker than water

When it comes to song

It sings it's own The Cowbird song.

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San Blas Trip

A field trip to San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico, was conducted from January 3-13, 2001, with eleven participants. Denis Vernier received the award for making the longest trip to join us. He flew from Montpellier, France, to Tempe to attend the trip. Several participants car-pooled to San Blas, others opted to fly to Puerto Vallarta and bus to San Blas. Car-pooling participants drove to Ciudad Obregon for the first night of lodging, birding Guaymas en route. The birds observed in Guaymas included blue-footed and brown boobies, little blue heron and reddish egret. The first day produced 74 species of birds. The second day was dedicated to driving from Ciudad Obregon to San Blas. This stretch of the trip produced birds with more tropical affinities. Roadside birds included magnificent frigatebird, gray and short-tailed hawk, black-throated magpie jay, black-shouldered kite, and the ever present tropical kingbird.

We arrived that evening in San Blas, joined the participants who arrived from Puerto Vallarta, and enjoyed a wonderful dinner at our hotel (Garza Canela). Early the following morning a short walk along the sewage pond road (it is a universal axiom that good birds are usually associated with sewage) produced crane hawk, gray hawk, cinnamon hummingbird, scrub euphonia, thick-billed and social flycatcher, and very fleeting views of the russet-crowned motmot. An afternoon trip to the shrimp ponds delighted us with views of roseate spoonbill and wood stork along with many sandpipers, herons, egrets and ducks.

The second day of birding took us to the shade coffee plantations above the town of La Bajada. This area is about a 30 minute drive from San Blas and is home to many birds not found at lower elevations. The coffee plantations are located in deep forested canyons where the birds are usually found in flocks. The forest can be silent for long periods of time then suddenly be interrupted by dazzling flocks of warblers, vireos, flycatchers and jays. Our trip was blessed to have Victor Smith along, who, in these quiet periods, would enlighten us with names and habits of the brilliantly colored butterflies fluttering at each sunlit patch of forest floor. Birds seen by the group included boat-billed flycatcher, San Blas jay (my best views in eight trips to San Blas), golden vireo, pale-billed and lineated woodpeckers. Blue-rumped parrotlet were in abundance. Present in the mixed flocks gleaning the tops of tropical evergreens were black-throated gray, virginia, nashville, yellow and black-and-white warblers, an indication of the importance of shade-grown coffee to the wintering habitat of birds associated with the United States and Canada.

Our third day of birding was spent enjoying the famous San Blas boat trips. We chartered both a morning and evening trip to observe the birds of the mangroves and fresh water marshes. The morning trip produced anhinga (almost within range of touching), laughing falcon, pauraques sleeping on low branches, and a green kingfisher. Our list was not limited to birds. Turtles, crocodiles and even a rather tame family of raccoons were seen at close quarters. The afternoon and night trip (a highlight for several participants) produced the common potoo (a large nightjar about the size of a great horned owl). However, the group missed the rufous-necked wood-rail, even though minutes prior to our arrival at the best location, three individuals were seen. This was a great disappointment!

The next few days were spent birding other areas surrounding the town. Particularly memorable was a pair of muscovy ducks perched in a very large kapok tree. Golden-cheeked woodpecker seemed to be everywhere. On our final day in San Blas several intrepid souls chartered a boat for one more attempt at locating the rufous-necked wood-rail. After twenty minutes of careful searching from the boat, Lee Burge spotted the denizen of the world of the mangrove roots skulking the shadows.

Next day we headed for Cerro de San Juan Ecological Reserve in search of birds inhabiting the higher altitudes. However, on the way there my Dodge van experienced trouble with its transmission. Fortunately Stan Tax (i.e. Saint Stan), managed to keep the van operating for the remainder of the trip, even though one was forced to shift the transmission by crawling under the vehicle.

At Cerro De San Juan we stayed in a quaint ranch-style lodge at the top of the mountain in an oak-pine forest. The flocks in this area contained birds very different from San Blas (only 15 miles as the sinaloa crow flies). Green jay, slate-throated redstart, flame-colored and red-headed tanagers, white-eared hummingbird and ivory-billed woodcreeper were present and easily observed. After two days at San Juan, we drove three participants to Tepic to catch a bus for Puerto Vallarta, and we left Victor at San Juan (he decided to extend his stay in Mexico). The remaining birders started the long trip back to Phoenix. After a brief stop near Tepic to observe 30-40 military macaws, we drove almost non-stop until we reached San Carlos (near Guaymas). Birding here produced mangrove swallow and several other birds for the list.

In summary, over eleven days we drove 2,300 miles, observed 277 species of birds in a variety of habitats, and enjoyed the company of ten wonderful people. However, the bird species count was not finalized. Bob Witzeman, the stalwart photographer of the trip, was reviewing his slides with Charles Babbitt, when Charles pointed out a stilt sandpiper in one of the slides (a birds not counted on the trip). Therefore, the final count appears to be 278 species.

I would like to acknowledge the participants of the trip and thank them for their donation to the Maricopa Audubon Society: Lee Burge, Gisela Kluwin, Georgia Nelson, Linda Peck, Victor Smith, Andree Tarby, Patty and Stan Tax, Denis Vernier and Bob Witzeman.

What's Next?

I am open to suggestions for future trips to other locations in Mexico, or Guatemala (Tikal). Call me at (480) 897-8608 with your suggestions.

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Killdeer

Alison Steen McGowan

Dee

dee

dee

The intense sound fell

From the sky.

Looking up revealed white

Breast and rusty wings.

Good morning,

I returned the greeting

With delight, to the first shorebird

I ever met,

Back then I called it sandpiper

But learned its true name

When one led me away from its

Nest with a feigned broken wing.

A beautiful friend, over the

Years met again and again.

Kill

dee

dee

dear.

Living Rivers

presents:

The Sustainable Water Project Tour: No Reservoirs Required

March 5 - 14, 2001

Salt Lake City • Albuquerque • Phoenix

Las Vegas • Los Angeles • Palm Springs

On the occasion of:

The 4th International Day of Action Against Dams,
and for Rivers Water and Life.

The mighty Colorado no longer reaches the sea. Its terminus is a toxic soup; the once-mighty Delta, a starving salt flat. International treasures like the Grand Canyon, Dinosaur National Monument and Colorado River Delta are starving for natural river flows.

Politics and concrete are killing the river, and the agencies responsible want you to believe that there's no water to spare for environmental restoration. Yet billions of gallons of subsidized water flow off industrial hay fields, tumbles over desert fountains, or evaporates off water ski parks.

Much of this water can stay in our rivers. Habitats can be revived. And still, human water needs can be met now, and for generations to come. Water conservation leads to river restoration. Lend your voice to make it happen.

Rally in support of a living Colorado. Call for an end to polluting, wasteful and subsidized irrigation practices. Support water-efficient organic farming. Demand municipal water and land use policies that mandate conservation. Tell these water agencies that their missions are to meet human needs and restore the environment by taking progressively less, not more, water from our rivers.

Join us as we stop at the headquarters of the major water users in the seven-state Basin and ask them to institute conservation programs and contribute **less than 1%** of their total allocation to restore the Colorado Delta.

Event Specifics

Monday, March 5, Salt Lake City, UT, 12:00 Noon

US Bureau of Reclamation Regional Office

Ask the Central Utah Project to contribute **less than 1%** of its allocation to Delta restoration

· Protest needless dam construction on the Bear River

Wednesday, March 7, Albuquerque, NM, 12:00 Noon

Re-water the Rio Grande & Colorado

City of Albuquerque

- Ask New Mexican water users to contribute ***less than 1%*** of their allocation to Delta restoration
- Protest diversion of Colorado River to the Rio Grande
- Demand that waters conservation policies replace plans for new water deliveries.

Friday, March 9, Phoenix , AZ, 10:30 a.m.

Arizona State Department of Agriculture

1688 W. Washington (NE corner of Washington and 17th Ave.)

· **Ask Central Arizona Project to contribute *less than 1%* of its water allocation to restore the Colorado Delta**

- Protest the needless diversion of Colorado River for water intensive desert agriculture
- Protest the sprawl-enabling pipeline from Lake Powell to Flagstaff
- Tell CAP Tucson doesn't want its polluted sprawl-enabling water

Monday, March 12, Las Vegas, NV, 12:00 Noon

Southern Nevada Water Authority & Las Vegas Valley Water District

- Mandate xeriscape gardening for Nevada
- No more fountains and artificial lakes in desert
- Ante-up ***less than 1%*** of Colorado river allocation for delta preservation

Tuesday, March 13, Palm Springs, CA, 12:00 Noon

Cochella Irrigation District headquarters

- Protest corporate welfare and agricultural waste of the Colorado River
- Support organic farmers and family farms
- Stop the poisoning of migratory birds and fish with agro-toxins
- Contribute ***less than 1%*** of Colorado River water to Delta restoration

Wednesday, March 14, Los Angeles, CA, 12:00 Noon

The Old Plaza across from Metropolitan Water District Headquarters

4th International Day of Action Against Dams and for Rivers Water and Life

Demand conservation polices for the regions 17 million Colorado River water recipients

- Support natural flows for the restoration of the Colorado River delta and Gulf of California
- Stop the Eastside Reservoir boondoggle
- Contribute ***less than 1%*** of Colorado River water allocation to Delta restoration

COLLABORATION

In addition to the themes presented publicly, one of the main purposes of the Sustainable Water Project Tour generally is for groups to come

together in solidarity for the health of rivers. As noted, the major threat to our rivers in the Southwest is our excessive consumption of water. Living Rivers and others would like to help increase awareness of this problem, and the solutions available to address it, which is where the idea for this tour came from. But its strength comes from the alliances formed in supporting the work that is being done in each locality, which when combined together, creates a growing regional awareness for conservation and restoration.

BACKGROUND

The timing of this event is to coincide with the fourth annual "International Days of Action for Rivers, Water and Life." The first event took place in Curitiba, Brazil in 1997. Last year events were held on behalf of 70 rivers in 26 countries. Here in the US, our organization joined David Brower on the Colorado River to usher in the "Century of River Restoration." This event, supported by 45 environmental groups, a number of Indian organizations, and businesses, received excellent publicity.

The purpose of the international "Day of Action" events is:

- 1) To celebrate the life that rivers sustain, and the need to preserve it.
- 2) To educate the public on the threats to rivers and watersheds, and the strategies available to eliminate them.
- 3) To discover equitable and sustainable ways to manage our rivers and watersheds.
- 4) To strengthen solidarity among river and water advocates, at the local, regional, national and international levels by collective participating in public events at the same time.
- 5) To show the world a diverse, worldwide movement dedicated to the health of rivers and the people and ecosystems that depend on them

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INTERNATIONAL CRANE FOUNDATION CO-FOUNDER TO BE GUEST SPEAKER AT ANNUAL BANQUET MEETING MAY 1ST.

We are delighted to announce that Dr. George Archibald, "the man who dances with cranes", and the man who co-founded the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, Wisconsin, will be our featured speaker at our Annual Banquet and Meeting on Tuesday, May 1st. George's story is featured in the February issue of Birder's World, where it is reported that his work with all fifteen crane species throughout the world, seven of which are considered as endangered and four more of which are proposed for listing, has brought him accolades from many environmental organizations, including the World Wildlife Fund and the National Audubon Society.

Come hear this dynamic speaker, vote for board candidates, and celebrate with us our successes and frustrations in this forty-ninth year as an Audubon chapter, comprised solely of volunteers, working towards making our world a better place for birds, for other wildlife, and thus for the human species to reside in and flourish.

The buffet dinner, which will feature cuisine to suit everyone's taste, will be \$20 per person. The cash bar and hospitality hour will begin at 6:00 p.m., and they'll start serving the buffet dinner at 6:45.

The place is the the Shalimar Country Club, one block north of Southern, midway between McClintock and Price, in Tempe. Make your reservations early by calling Herb Fibel at (480) 966-5246, or Karen Kaiser at (602) 276-3312. You can pay at the door or mail your check to Herb Fibel, Treasurer, 1128 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282.

Come and meet old friends and maybe make some new ones. We'll see you on May Day!

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Let's get to the important part of this review - buy this book if you haven't bought one already.

In the 30 years I've been birding and buying field guides, this is only the third time I've become excited by the possibilities of a new field guide: first time was when the Peterson

field guides were revised to have all color illustrations, text facing illustrations, and good maps in the back; the second was in 1983 when the first edition of the National Geographic guide came out. Both of these new guides greatly improved the information available to birders, which resulted in better understanding of birds, bird distribution, plumages, and identification.

The Sibley Guide is the next step in supplying birders with useful information about birds, plumage, geographical variation, and identification. Some of the features that make this such an important and necessary book are:

- Consistent illustration style and artist throughout - David Sibley did all the artwork in his economical style that still shows birds in extremely lifelike positions.
- Geographic variations for almost all populations of birds in the US - separate illustrations for western and Florida populations of Burrowing Owl, for instance.
- Most complete coverage of plumage differences for different ages of same species - there are 39 illustrations for Red-tailed Hawk on the two pages that Sibley devotes to this highly variable and wide-spread raptor, while the non-descript Brown Creeper gets three adult variations and one juvenile illustration
- Illustrations of birds in flight, showing top and bottom of wings in side views
- Subtle details - how a White-crowned Sparrow's appearance changes when the crown feathers are raised or lowered; the shape of the primary feathers for hummingbirds, etc.
- Most complete description of vocalizations.

What some people have complained about:

- Sibley has labeled populations of birds by his own invented geographic designations, rather than using accepted sub species names for the most part. Sibley has defended this approach on his web page, explaining his reasons. He makes a lot of sense, but some people will still not be happy with his explanations. In order to partly satisfy some of these people, Sibley is preparing complete lists of the scientific names for the regional populations he has illustrated in his book and making these lists available to everyone for download from his web site. This in itself is a remarkable event, and something I would have never expected from any other previous author. But this is very typical of Sibley's sharing of information.
- The book is too large and too heavy to be a practical field guide. I doubt if very many people will attempt to carry this book in the field due to the size and weight. But I know it will be consulted "back at the car" or "back at home" as soon as possible after a session of field birding. This is how I am using my copy.
- A few expected changes in bird names made it into Sibley's guide, but have not happened in the rest of the birding world. Sibley has already apologized that these names slipped past in the final days of proofing the guide. So, Sibley's "American Magpie" is still officially called the Black-billed Magpie, and "Northern Caracara" remains Crested Caracara.
- The first edition (I expect there will be many more printings and editions to follow) is a bit heavy in the use of red ink. Some of the birds, such as Brown Thrasher, Wood Thrush, Canyon Wren, Spotted and Eastern Towhees, are too red as a result.

As mentioned before, Sibley has a web site that provides additional valuable information. Visit it at www.sibleyart.com. Another web resource for the Sibley guide is a quick index designed to be printed out and pasted into the rear flyleaf cover. Visit the Northern Arizona Audubon Society page at <http://nazas.org/FreeSibleyIndex.htm>.

So, what are you waiting for? Buy your own copy and start learning from a master of bird observation and bird illustration.

The Maricopa Audubon Society wishes to thank the following people who donated their time and talents as field trip or workshop leaders during calendar year 2000. Trips and workshops are an essential part of our program and we are grateful to these individuals and organizations for their support:

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