



# The Cactus Wren-Dition

Spring 2003 • Volume 29, No. 1

**CONTENTS:** [What is the Maricopa Audubon Society](#) • [Be A Friend, Be A Friend!](#) • [Events & Programs](#) • [Annual Meeting & Banquet](#) • [Notes & Announcements](#) • [In Memoriam, Joyce Fibel](#) • [Birdathon 2003](#) • [From the Editor](#) • [Photo Quiz](#) • [Scalping Arizona's Forests](#) • [Field Trip Review](#) • [Classified Ad](#) • [Field Trips](#) • [AZ Special Species - Common Black Hawk](#) • [Field Observations](#) • [Carefree Christmas Bird Count Summary](#) • [Photo Quiz Answers](#)



Rufous-Backed Robin photographed by Jim Burns at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

## THE END IS NEAR

### BECOME A FRIEND

#### WHAT IS THE MARICOPA AUDUBON SOCIETY

When National Audubon adopted its strategic plan, which later evolved into its 2020 Vision, two NAS board committees were formed-one's purpose was to see to the formation of a state office in each state. The other was to define an Audubon chapter. Four years later the first committee had seen to the formation of 18 state offices. Ted Eubanks, now departed from NAS, was in charge of the second committee and reported at the NAS board meeting in Tucson that his committee was still unable to get a handle on the definition of an Audubon chapter. I think the reason for this is that each of the 500 plus Audubon chapters in the U.S. is different from every other chapter.

Fifty years ago this July, Harry and Ruth Crockett, birding pioneers in Maricopa County for many years, announced that they were forming a birding club. At the first meeting in July 1953, they elected a president and newsletter editor-James Warner, and called themselves "The Maricopa Audubon Society". The first newsletter, "The Roadrunner", was published in August of that year. Soon thereafter the group decided to apply for individual National Audubon membership cards. To do so, each member signed a personal pledge to support conservation of bird habitat. By July 1954 the group had 51 members. Maricopa Audubon Society became a branch of The National Audubon Society in July 1954. The 52nd member was assigned to the chapter by National Audubon at around that same time. In January 1955, Dr. Abe Margolin became the group's first Field Trip chairman. In February 1955 the first Great-tailed grackle was spotted in the County, and on April 10, 1955, the first nesting European starlings were discovered at MacDonald's River Ranch!

Of interest is the published financial report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 1956-Income was \$143.44 in dues share from NAS and \$5.00 from the sale of NAS armbands-Total Income was \$148.44. Expenses were: Roadrunner expense--\$80.16, and all other expenses--\$40.27, for a total of Expenses of \$121.43. For the following fiscal year the group received \$88.75 in dues share from NAS, out of total receipts of \$101.85, and spent \$55.55 for Roadrunner publication expenses out of total expenditures of \$116.24. In the two years presented, dues share represented 97% and 87%, respectively, of the chapter's total income, while the newsletter expense represented respectively 66% and 48% of the chapter's total expenditures. In the fiscal year ended May 31, 2002, dues share (which NAS is phasing out) represented 36.5% (our largest revenue source) of our total income, while Wren-dition publication and mailing expense represented 43.9% of our total expenditures (more than 2 1/2 times as much as our next largest expenditure!)

In April 1959 a Maricopa Audubon sanctuary was discussed, and the following committees were formed-program, field trips, publicity, education, membership, conservation, finance, social, and sanctuary. In March 1957, Bix Demaree was elected vice-president, and in May 1960 she was elected president. In May 1962 Janet Witzeman was elected secretary. Bob Witzeman was elected vice-president in May 1966 and has been on the board ever since.

In April 1966 the Roadrunner states: "Our membership is made up of the people who believe in the program of the National Audubon Society, of which MAS is an active branch, and we are interested in saving the out-of-doors and the wildlife found there."

#### BE A FRIEND, BE A FRIEND!

Here's the problem. We are currently publishing four Cactus Wren-ditions a year. We would like to go back to six a year. The Wren-dition is being mailed out to approximately 2,100 joint NAS and MAS members. The cost is a little over \$2,000 per issue. NAS formerly covered this expense with dues share payments that were sent to the chapters. NAS is phasing out this item. This fiscal year we received \$6,400 in dues share from NAS. Next fiscal year we will receive the same. Thereafter, it appears as if this revenue source will have run dry.

Your MAS board has spent many hours trying to decide how to resolve this dilemma. What we have come up with is that only local members who become "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" will receive the Cactus Wren-dition after the next two issues. The annual cost of being an individual or family 'Friend' will be a donation of \$20 or more. As a 'Friend' you will receive a membership card. You'll continue to receive the Wren-dition in the mail, and there will be other perks as well. For example, you will receive a free raffle ticket at each membership meeting you attend, a 10% discount off books and other items purchased at the book table at the monthly meetings, and a 10 % discount off the per person price of our annual banquet.

Obviously, we are hopeful that your 'Friends' donation each year will cover not only the cost of receiving your Wren-dition, but programs, field trips, conservation action and environmental education, too.

Please make your \$20 or more check payable to Maricopa Audubon Society, put 'Friend' in the lower left-hand corner of the check, and mail it to: Herb Fibel, Treasurer, 1128 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282-3940. Your 'Friend' membership card will be sent to you by return mail.

Please be patient with us as we segue into this new system.

In 1980, when I was president, we voted to change the name of our newsletter to "The Cactus Wren-dition".

So, who are we? In my opinion we are a bunch of birdwatchers ("birders", if you will) providing a meeting place and birding-related activities for our fellow birdwatchers in the community, while fostering an ethic of seeking to save "... the out-of-doors and the wildlife found there, through conservation efforts and environmental education."



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### PROGRAMS

**Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month, September-April**, at the Phoenix Zoo Auditorium. Meetings start at 7:30, and feature a speaker, book sales, refreshments, and a chance to socialize with fellow MAS members. Non-members welcome!

Join us for a pre-meeting dinner at Pete's 19th Tee, 1405 N Mill Avenue, Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) starting at 6:00 p.m. Except for the September meeting which will be our annual potluck starting at 6:30. Each attendee is invited to bring a platter of his or her favorite h'ors d'oeuvres, sufficiently large enough to serve at least six people. We'll provide the eating utensils, the plates, and the drinks, bring a friend and enjoy swapping birding stories. The regular meeting will begin at 7:30. Meals average about \$5.00 with a variety of choices on the menu. Join us!

### PROGRAM TOPICS

**February 4:** Mike Rupp "*Birds of the Salt River – Gillespie Dam to Coon Bluff*". The owner of Rupp Aerial Photography, Inc., Mike Rupp successfully combines vocational and life interests. His documentary-style video presentation contains superb footage of birds and assorted creatures along this stretch of the Salt River. Having flown and birded around the Phoenix area for twenty years, Mike has just published "*The Birdseye Guide to 101 Birding Sites, Phoenix*". This book is currently available directly through Rupp Aerial (602-277-0439), at the Wild Bird Center in north Scottsdale, and at the Phoenix and Mesa locations of Wide World of Maps. Additional outlets will be available in the future. Mike has graciously agreed to have copies of this book for sale and will do a book signing for those interested. ([www.ruppaerialphoto.com](http://www.ruppaerialphoto.com), select Birding Guide on the home page.

**March 4:** Jim Burns "*El Canelo*"

biologist, MAS member Pete Moulton has been an avid birder and naturalist for over 30 years. He has a life-long interest in photography, and became fascinated with photographing these diminutive animals that share many habitats with the birds we all enjoy seeing. Think they're always around water? Are they territorial? Join us for an engaging evening among Arizona's dragons and damsels

**May 6, 2003:** Dan Fischer "*Early Southwest Ornithologists – On The Trail Of Pioneering Birders*". MAS is very pleased to have Dan Fischer as the guest speaker for our annual banquet. Dan has traveled the southwest for over fifty years, photographing birds and exploring our diverse environments. Dan and his wife live in a stone house in the Chiricahua Mountains in southeast Arizona, which he says isn't as warm or as cool as you would think it should be! He will be talking about

### NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Nominating Committee for Annual Board Elections:** On the back page of the Wren-dition you will find the names of the present officers and directors of Maricopa Audubon. You will probably note that many of these people have been on the board for a long time. However, it is not because any of these people have a "lock" on any of these positions. Au contraire, it's because we have not been able to find anyone else willing to undertake any of these tasks. If you would like to serve in any position on the board, you need only be a National Audubon member assigned geographically to this chapter, or a local member or "Friend". Just let a member of the nominating committee know of your interest, and your name will be placed in nomination at the annual meeting.

Our Nominating Committee for the upcoming MAS year is: Jim and Lynn Blaugh, (Co-chairs), (480) 491-2509; Polly Schmidt, (480) 946-7526; and Charlotte Norrid, (480) 967-4957.

#### Basha's donates to Help

**Preserve Arizona:** Give the cashier the charity code #29039 between 9/1 and 1/31 each year and Basha's will donate 1% of your total to 18 conservation & environmental groups including: az wildlife federation, audubon arizona, tucson audubon, native seeds/SEARCH, grand canyon trust, gray hawk nature center, oracle land trust, trout unlimited, wild at heart, az recycling coalition,

Are you looking for a fun way to **volunteer by sharing your birding skills**? Boyce Thompson Arboretum is looking for birders who would like to lead bird walks. BTA offers guided birdwalks each Sunday morning from 8:30-10:30 during the spring and fall migrations. The spring series runs Feb. 16th through early May. A crew of volunteers rotate birdwalk duties. Contact Paul Wolterbeek, Volunteer Program Coordinator, 520-689-2723.

**Hawk Stalk:** Feb. 22, Pete Dunne will be our celebrity leader on the last Hawk Stalk of the season. The cost is \$100 per person, and the trip will be limited to 10 participants (we already have 4 but will keep a waiting list). For more information, call at 520-432-1388, e-mail at [sabo@sabo.org](mailto:sabo@sabo.org), or check out the web at [www.sabo.org/news.htm](http://www.sabo.org/news.htm).

#### Basic Birding Class by Herb Fibel:

resumes March 20. The classes are sponsored by the Tempe Parks and Recreation Department, Outdoor Recreation Section, and will take place on Thursday evenings from 7-8 p.m., at the Pyle Adult Center in the city complex at Rural and Southern. The class runs 7 weeks and will include 3 field trips. If you would like to learn basic bird identification skills, this class is for you. You don't need to live in Tempe to sign up, but pre-registration is a must. Tempeans can register February 18th or thereafter, and non-Tempeans can register February 24th and thereafter. Be sure to call (480) 350-5200 and ask for Lynda Myers, Recreation Coordinator.

Ranch, Texas. Jim Burns, MAS writer/photographer, highlights his partnership in the 2002 Valley Land Fund Photo Contest with Monica and Ray Burdette, owners of El Canelo Ranch, north of Raymondville, Texas. The ranch is known in the birding world for the Ferruginous Pygmy-owls nesting in the yard at the inn. Jim is a regular contributor to the Wren-dition through the Photo Quiz and articles on Arizona's Special Species.

**April 1:** Peter Moulton "Beyond Birds – Dragons and Damsels in Arizona" We've all seen them – those creatures with gossamer wings, hovering and zipping about, sometimes found in a shrike's beak! Join us for a glimpse into the world of dragons and damsels (dragonflies and damselflies) and you will be amazed at their attitudes, habits and colors. Trained as a

## Committees/ Support

**Activist Alert:**  
Shawn Bauer  
602-828-3607  
[shawnbauer@hotmail.com](mailto:shawnbauer@hotmail.com)

**Arizona Audubon  
Council Rep:**  
Herb Fibel  
408-966-5246  
[herbertsfibel@aol.com](mailto:herbertsfibel@aol.com)

**Audubon Phone**  
480-829-8209

**Book Store**  
Richard & Karen Kaiser  
602-276-3312

**Field Observations**  
Janet Witzeman  
602-840-6089  
[jwtzeman@aol.com](mailto:jwtzeman@aol.com)

## Hospitality

**Web Page**  
Michell Fulton  
480-968-5141  
[webmaster@maricopaadubon.org](mailto:webmaster@maricopaadubon.org)

Maricopa Audubon Web Site  
[www.maricopaadubon.org](http://www.maricopaadubon.org)

## 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 natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

his recent book, which reveals the regions' avian diversity as he traces 100 ornithologists from 1528 to 1900. As Col. Thomas Henry wrote in 1853, there "are to be found many curious birds, peculiar to the country." Copies of the book will be available for sale and Dan has graciously agreed to do a book signing for those who are interested. Please plan to attend our last event until next fall. (for more information on the book, visit [www.uapress.arizona.edu](http://www.uapress.arizona.edu) and type Dan Fischer in the search bar.)

**Speakers wanted:** If you have ideas for speakers, or if you would like to make a presentation yourself, please contact Cynthia Donald, Program Chair, at (602) 791-5157 or [planres@earthlink.net](mailto:planres@earthlink.net).

## ANNUAL MEETING & BANQUET

It feels odd to be thinking about our Annual Meeting and Banquet in January, when it is not until May, but with quarterly Wren-ditions, thinking ahead is necessary.

On May 6, 2003, Maricopa Audubon Society will celebrate the completion of its 50th year of providing a meeting place, programs, and activities of interest to birders and would-be birders, and of fighting to save those special places where a wide variety of avian wildlife can be found. Come share the fun, toast our accomplishments, elect a new board, and enjoy an excellent program, at Shalimar Country Club, 2032 E. Golf Ave., Tempe (one block north of Southern, midway between Price and McClintock).

We are pleased to present as our guest speaker, Dan Fischer, who lives in a stone house in the Chiricahuas, and who has traveled extensively photographing birds and exploring Arizona's diverse environments for over 50 years. Dan is the author of "Early Southwest Ornithologists-On the Trail of Pioneering Birders," in which he traces 100 ornithologists who birded Arizona between 1528 and 1900. Copies of his book will be available for sale, and he has graciously agreed to do a book signing for those who are interested.

A buffet dinner, which will feature cuisine to suit everyone's taste, will be \$25 a person (\$22.50 with your 'Friends' membership card). The cash bar and hospitality hour will begin at 6:00 p.m., and the buffet will begin at 7:00. Dress is casual.

Reservations are a must. Make your reservations early by calling Herb

southwest wildlife rehabilitation & education foundation, az association for environmental education, mcdowell sonoran land trust, willow bend environmental education center, four corners school of outdoor education, grand canyon wildlands council, maricopa audubon society, and land & water fund of the rockies. For more information go to [www.efaz.org](http://www.efaz.org) or call 480-969-3682.

**Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch** suffered much damage in the April fire that swept through the ranch. There is both an immediate and a long-term need for volunteers to assist with a wide-range of tasks as the Research Ranch implements a recovery and restoration plan. If you are interested in helping please call Sam Campana at 602 468 6470 for information. Please do not just show up without calling.

**The Birdseye Guide to 101 Birding Sites, Phoenix:** A new guide published by Rupp Aerial Photography. The maps are excellent, it is all in color and is \$23.95. For more information check [www.ruppaerialphoto.com](http://www.ruppaerialphoto.com). Also catch the author, Mike Rupp, at February's meeting.

**Birding in Cuba:** February 15-24, 2003. Under a license from the U.S. Treasury Department, Grand Canyon University is offering an adult education class on the birds of Cuba that includes a 10 day trip to the major birding areas of Cuba. The focus of the trip will be to locate and study the 21 endemic birds of Cuba, as well as birds rarely found elsewhere in North America (Ivory-billed woodpecker!?) The cost is between \$2,500 and \$3,000. Linda and Tom Rawles will be leading the trip. For more information contact Linda at [lrwales@grand-canyon.edu](mailto:lrwales@grand-canyon.edu) or at (602) 279-5900.

For a detailed itinerary email the editor and it can be sent via email. In *Winging It*, ABA's newsletter, is information for 2 more approved study trips to Cuba. These trips are sponsored by Manchester Community College. For information contact Gary Markowski at 860-354-5590 or [cubirds@aol.com](mailto:cubirds@aol.com). The dates are February 13-22 and February 27- March 8.

**The ALEUTIAN GOOSE FESTIVAL:** A Celebration of Wildness, March 21-24, 2003. 140 Marine Way-Crescent City, California 95531, 707-465-0888 ~ email [soar2@northcoast.com](mailto:soar2@northcoast.com), check out the web site at [www.redwoodlink.com/soar](http://www.redwoodlink.com/soar). Once on the Endangered Species List with only 800 birds, this magnificent goose now numbers 40,000+ and has joined the elite group of species that have recovered enough to be taken off of the endangered list. Our festival guests are treated to the sight of tens of thousands of these birds lifting off Castle Island at dawn filling the sky over the Pacific.

**ABA Annual Convention:** June 2-8, 2003 in Eugene, Oregon. Call the ABA or check their website for more information.

**More birding and nature festivals.** [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org) and [www.birdinghotspot.com](http://www.birdinghotspot.com).

**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.

**Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts.** For information, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com)

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. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

## IN MEMORIAM, JOYCE FIBEL

By Laurie Nessel

**M**aricopa Audubon Society lost a longtime, dedicated member when Joyce Fibel, 76, passed away on November 14th. Joyce, wife of Herb Fibel, served MAS in various capacities over the years including secretary and mailing chairman. Birding is an obsession for many of us and it was heartwarming to see Joyce and Herb enjoy and promote birdwatching

old days." That was when Gila Bend was on the main road to the coast. So many of our chapter members in these earlier times must have unknowingly met and been served by Joyce.



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.

Fibel at (480) 966-5246, or Cynthia Donald at (602) 791-5157. You may pay at the door or you may mail your check to: Herb Fibel, Treasurer, 1128 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282-3940.

This is going to be a very special event that you won't want to miss.

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together.

Bob Witzeman told me about the time he and Herb and Joyce were passing through Gila Bend on a birding trip. They stopped at a Dairy Queen-like store on the east side of town. While they were ordering, Joyce remarked that she had worked there some 40 years ago. She had an interesting time reminiscing with the store's staff about the "good

Over the years, Joyce was always most gracious and generous at sharing her home and her time on behalf of the chapter. She was also an accomplished pianist and talented still-life painter. She was originally from Toledo, Ohio. We will miss her.

Donations in Joyce's memory can be made to the Maricopa Audubon Society, Foundation for Senior Living, The Alzheimer's Association or Hospice of the Valley.

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**Rufous-Backed Robin**

photographed by **Jim Burns** at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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## BIRDATHON 2003

Birdathon is our annual fundraiser. Money collected supports MAS activities to better serve our members and our mission. Birdathon pays for important conservation and education programs like Audubon Adventures. Anyone can participate. All you do is collect pledges per species or for a set amount. Then on the week of April 20<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> during peak spring migration, you bird for a 24-hour period anywhere in Arizona. Afterwards, you turn your pledges in to our treasurer, Herb Fibel, 1128 E. Geneva, Tempe, 85282. Pledge forms can be picked up at the monthly meetings, downloaded from our web site [www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org), or mailed by request. *Pledges must be received by May 14th to be eligible for prizes.* Prizes will be awarded in May for various categories including the most species seen, the best bird seen, most lifers seen, most money raised by an individual or a team, most hours spent birding, etc. You may form a team or go solo. If you are new to birding and want to join a team, let me know and I will place you on a team. You don't need to be an expert to participate. You don't even need to travel to be eligible for prizes. You can count species in your neighborhood or your yard, or simply send in a donation.

All donors of \$50 or more will be listed in the summer Wrendition unless requested otherwise.

To join a team, lead a team, get pledge forms mailed to you, donate a prize, or help the Birdathon committee, call Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614, [laurienessel@hotmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@hotmail.com).

Maricopa Audubon Society thanks all of our kind sponsors for their generous support in this year's Birdathon fundraiser and encourages our members to patronize them whenever possible.

## BIRDATHON 2003 PRIZES & DONORS:

Two hummingbird feeders from **Wild Birds Unlimited**, 6432 S. McClintock, Tempe, 85283, (480) 777-7991

Ecuador and its Galapagos: The Ecotavellers' Wildlife Guide written and donated by **Dr. Dave Pearson**

Two nights at the **Santa Rita Lodge** Nature Resort in Madera Canyon (520) 625-8746, [santaritalodge.com](http://santaritalodge.com), [lcollister@theriver.com](mailto:lcollister@theriver.com)

One night for two at the **Ramsey Canyon Inn** 29 Ramsey Canyon Drive, Hereford, AZ 85615, (520) 378-3010 [lodging@ramseycanyoninn.com](mailto:lodging@ramseycanyoninn.com)

Family passes to the **Desert Botanical Gardens**, 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, AZ 85008, (602) 941-1217, <http://www.dbg.org>

Two nights for two at the **Casa de San Pedro Bed and Breakfast**, 8933 S. Yell Lane, Hereford, AZ 85615, (520) 366-1300, [www.bedandbirds.com](http://www.bedandbirds.com), [info@bedandbirds.com](mailto:info@bedandbirds.com)

\$20 gift certificate from **Changing Hands Bookstore**, 6428 E. McClintock Dr., Tempe 85283, (480) 730-0205, [www.changinghands.com](http://www.changinghands.com)

Stained glass window by Laurie Nessel

Guest passes to **Boyce Thompson** [AZ Traveler Guidebook - Birds of AZ;](#)

## Photo Quiz

By Jim Burns



**A) Good Photo, Easy Bird**



**B) Good Photo, Difficult Bird**

**Arboretum**, 37615 U.S. Highway 60, Superior, AZ 85273 U.S.A., (520) 689-2723, <http://ag.arizona.edu/BTA/>

Two signed copies of The Birdseye Guide to 101 Birding Sites written and donated by **Mike Rupp**, (602) 277-0439, <http://ruppaerialphoto.com/>

Guide to Birds of the Salton Sea, by Barbara Massey and Richard Zembal and Hummingbirds of the West pocket guide. Donated by **Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum**, [www.desertmuseum.org](http://www.desertmuseum.org), (520) 883-1380, 2021 N. Kinney Rd., Tucson, AZ 85743

A certificate good for a Canyon Walk, from **Southeast Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO)**, P.O.Box 5521, Bisbee, AZ 85603-5521, [sabo@sabo.org](mailto:sabo@sabo.org), <http://www.sabo.org/>, (520) 432-1388

A Field Guide to Hummingbirds of North America (Peterson Field Guides) (signed copy), written and donated by **Sheri Williamson** from SABO

Bird Log: A Kids Journal; Southern AZ Trails; NAS Guide to Wild Bird Photography; Bird Watchers Coloring Book- Birds of the Southwest; donated by **The Nature Conservancy of Arizona, Muleshoe Lodging**, 6502 N. Muleshoe Ranch Rd., Willcox, AZ 85643, [www.muleshoelodging.org](http://www.muleshoelodging.org), [muleshoe@starband.net](mailto:muleshoe@starband.net), 520-212-4295

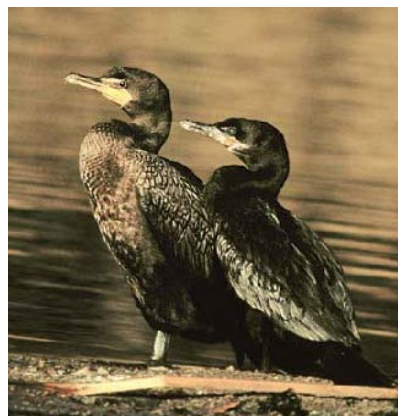
Sony FM Walkman donated by **Mr. Telescope**, 20 E. Camelback, Phoenix, AZ (602) 955-5521

gift certificate from **Wide World of Maps**, (602) 279-2323, 2626 W. Indian School Rd., Phoenix, 1444 W. Southern Ave., Mesa.

One night for two at the **George Walker House Bed and Breakfast**, (520) 558-2287, (209) 827-0936 (Nov.-Feb.), [www.thegeorgewalkerhouse.com](http://www.thegeorgewalkerhouse.com); [Winjac12@vtc.net](mailto:Winjac12@vtc.net); 2225 W. George Walker Lane, Portal, AZ 85623

merchandise from **Trader Joe's**, various valley locations.

Log on to [www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org) for more prizes, too late to list in this issue.



**C) Bad Photo, Easy Bird**

## From The Editor

By Deva Burns

Do you miss the bird on this issue's cover? As you know from announcements and articles over the past few months, changes are in the offing. Due to National Audubon's reduction of dues share, Maricopa Audubon no longer has the money to continue printing over 2000 issues of the newsletter. Treasurer Herb Fibel's article on page 2 explains the Board's solution to this problem. If any of you has the resources to help us continue to put the newsletter into print, please contact me or any of the Board members. Otherwise, after the next issue, we will be mailing the printed Cactus Wren edition only to Friends Of MAS. We hope all of you enjoy and value the Wren edition and will send in your checks to continue receiving the timely information and great articles the newsletter provides.

Last updated: March 10, 2003

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Mail comments to: [webmaster@maricopaaudubon.org](mailto:webmaster@maricopaaudubon.org)



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**Rufous-Backed Robin**

photographed by **Jim Burns** at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

## SCALPING ARIZON'A FORESTS

By Bob Witzeman



Mt. Trumbull, AZ. NAU School of Forestry's forest "fireproofing" is old-growth logging masquerading as fireproofing. The 36-inch yardstick barely covers the diameter of this forest giant. Ironically, these thick-barked old-growth trees are the least likely to burn.

In the aftermath of the Rodeo-Chedeski fire one reads that environmentalists were to be blamed because they opposed forest thinning. In fact, environmentalists here have never opposed thinning projects but they have opposed so-called "thinning" projects which were old-growth logging disguised as thinning.

Now President Bush and the logging industry wish to circumvent our nation's environmental laws and fast track Bush's so-called "Forest Health Initiative." Besides going after old-growth, they would short-circuit environmental law in order to log

*If the land mechanism as a whole is good, then every part is good, whether we understand it or not. --Aldo Leopold*

off standing, burned trees such as at the Rodeo-Chedeski site. Arizona's Senator Kyl has stated: "...burned trees that are left standing present a serious threat to the overall health of the forest." Equally curious, Apache/Sitgraves Forest Supervisor, John Bedell, recently claimed that standing, burned trees represented a dangerous "fuel loading" fire threat.

In fact, salvage logging and removal of burned trees frustrates the vigorous re-emergence of the next generation of a forest's trees, plants, streams, fish and wildlife, namely:

--Logging machinery and access roads used to remove the burned trees cause hillside soil erosion, stream siltation, and flooding and destruction of the fish and riparian ecosystems. When burned trees fall they create jackstraw or herringbone-like patterns which become small check dams holding soil in place. This reduces the loss of precious topsoil and downstream flooding.

## SCALPING ARIZON'A FORESTS

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Mt. Trumbull, AZ. The NAU School of Forestry's "pre-settlement restoration" is old-growth logging under the guise of forest "thinning." Note the 36-inch yardstick across the huge 16 and 20-inch old-growth logs ready for the sawmill.

Survival chances for threatened Spotted Owls and Goshawks after "pre-settlement restoration" is doubtful.

Squirrels and canopy-dependent wildlife fare badly. The squirrels lack escape pathways in these open, barren, overgrazed clearings. The pre-settlement thinnings at Mt. Trumbull and Ft. Valley are so extensive that less than 20% of the forest canopy appears to remain. See: [http://www.swfa.org/restoration/booklet\\_files/fig\\_02.html](http://www.swfa.org/restoration/booklet_files/fig_02.html)

Forest Service studies say homes and property can be protected by thinning the few hundred feet of the wildland/urban interspace. Spending billions on exempt-from-law "thinning" and "stealth" logging deep in the remote forest would be wildly costly and do nothing to protect homes and property.

Society seems unable to recognize that forest fires have been a part of our existence for millennia. Until cattle grazing and fire suppression are eliminated, and our homes protected, our forests will always be in jeopardy.

.....  
**COTTONWOOD/CLARKDALE**  
**SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2002**

By Richard Kaiser

I last led a Maricopa Audubon Society field trip to this area in the same month of 1995, and since residential development has been proposed for the Peck's Lake area since the mid-1980's, I asked another member who



--Logging burned trees removes the "fertilizer" needed for the next generation of forest plants and trees. After falling to the ground and decomposing, the burned trees provide vital minerals, nutrients and topsoil.

--Fallen trees or snags become invaluable cover and habitat for birds and wildlife. Trunks which break off create cavities for bats, owls, mammals and other wildlife. Standing dead trees become nesting sites and perches for songbirds and raptors. Their trunks become food sources for woodpeckers, nest cavities for birds, and food for fungi and insects after they fall to earth and decompose. On the forest floor they provide microclimates and shade for a generation of sun intolerant plants, trees, and animals.

--Since fires burn in mosaic patterns with many surviving islands of unburned areas, these burned/unburned interfaces become Meccas of biotic diversity. Trees with only a few unburned needles may recover but salvage loggers destroy them. Yet they are vital in rebuilding and reseeding the next forest generation.

Behind the Administration's and Congress' rush to "fireproof" our forests is the hidden motive of old-growth logging. Senator Kyl would introduce "thinning" legislation using the so-called "pre-settlement restoration" method of old-growth logging of NAU School of Forestry professor Wallace Covington.

"Scalping" is the only word to describe the results of "pre-settlement "thinned" forests (see photo). They don't look like forests but instead like some kind of strange, open park with a few skinny, lonely trees.

Photographs of Covington's "thinning" operation taken by conservationists visiting his Mt. Trumbull site reveal 36" diameter stumps and a logging deck stacked with 16 to 30 inch diameter forest giants awaiting the trip to the mill. Large, unsightly, open spaces and a few scattered trees are all that remain at the site.

A new bill just introduced into Congress by Senators Kyl and Domenici proposes to finance these NAU Forestry School thinning research to the extent of \$5-6 million per year. Already this forestry professor's studies have received some \$11 million thanks to Senator Kyl's generosity.

A Great Horned Owl had moved in to the Covington deforestation site at Mt. Trumbull. Great Horned Owls (and cowbirds) prefer disturbed, logged, open areas, where they drive out Spotted and Flammulated Owls and canopy-preferring birds and mammals.



*Ft. Valley, Arizona. This NAU School of Forestry "pre-settlement restoration" forest "thinning" project resulted in a sparse, scalped "forest." This site no longer contains suitable tree density or canopy closure for many forest canopy-dependent species (e.g. Northern Goshawk, Mexican Spotted Owl, Abert's squirrel). Photo: SW Forest Alliance*

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had accompanied me on these field trips in the earlier decade, whether she had heard if the area was still pristine for birdwatching. Twelve participants and I were glad to find water at Peck's Lake and Tavasci March and good birding, on this day. But Birding Sedona & The Verde Valley by Virginia Gilmore and the Northern Arizona Audubon Society, confirms to me that the area is owned by Phelps Dodge Corporation, and construction is planned for housing, a golf course, and sewage ponds. So it seems like future trips still have to be questionable.

The higher elevation produced a slight chill in the early morning, but the sky was crystal clear blue, well appreciated by the birds and us. We spent most of the morning driving and walking around a portion of Peck's Lake. On the water, we were able to see and identify Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, and Lesser Scaup, but most of the wintering birds were American Widgeon, Ring-necked Duck, and American Coot. I had not suggested to bring telescopes for our initial walk as I had not anticipated the numbers of ducks, or the observation area we found, on the lake, so we had to leave the distant Wood Duck sighting as questionable. A flock of Canada Geese called as they flew overhead. In the numerous bushes and trees along the road, we heard and saw several Verdins, House Finches, White-crowned Sparrows, Abert's Towhees, and Gambel's Quail. On this morning, there were far fewer American Robins than the numbers heard and seen two weeks earlier on a scouting trip. Some of us were able to see a Yellow-rumped Warbler and Lesser Goldfinch, and hear a

Black-tailed Gnat-catcher. Interestingly, Gila Woodpeckers were only heard, and never seen, several times. Raptors are always exhilarating to see, so we were excited to see a Red-tailed Hawk soaring overhead, a Northern Harrier flying over the marsh, and best, a beautiful adult Bald Eagle high overhead. Further down, we finally saw the perched Belted Kingfisher that we had heard in flight before, and a flock of blackbirds that I thought were just European Starlings, It wouldn't be complete without mentioning the ubiquitous House Sparrows and Mourning Doves seen!

A paved wheelchair-accessible trail with an overview of Tavasci March leading from the Tuzigoot National Monument building was even better with less-than-common birds, especially as the temperature warmed beautifully. A Greater Roadrunner was able to be spotted in the opening by the road that snaked down below. The group had good views of a Rock Wren, Say's Phoebe, and American Kestrel. Not necessarily expecting sightings of a Scrub Jay and Western Meadowlark, the colors and markings of these species initially confused us, but the several sightings and the bright colors on the sunny day made us sure. At the end of the trail, with benches for us to rest, the overlook provided us a view of some water in the marsh. The couple of ducks there were at first troubling to identify, but I confirmed they were Green-winged Teal from the greenish reflection on the head. With such nice bird sightings on this trail, most of us were reluctant to leave, so we dispersed in returning. A few of us saw a Western Bluebird upon the return walk. Counting all species encountered, including ones heard only and the couple of questionable identifications, it adds up to 47 for the six hours we enjoyed birding on this day.

Classified Ad

#### Arivaca, SE Arizona:

Casa Bella B&B: closest lodging to California Gulch (Five-striped Sparrow!), and Buenos Aires NWR, 6 comfortable rms w/baths, secluded on 20 acres; reasonable rates incl. a delicious breakfast & other meals by arrangement. Winner top 15 most environmentally friendly B&B - Arrington Press. 877/604-3385; [www.casa-bella-bandb.com](http://www.casa-bella-bandb.com).

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# The Cactus Wren-Dition

Spring 2003 • Volume 29, No. 1



**Rufous-Backed Robin**

photographed by **Jim Burns** at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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## Field Trips

By Mark Horlings

### Car Pooling:

Maricopa Audubon Strongly encourages carpooling on filed trips. Please make every effort to organize your own carpool; consolidate vehicles at meeting places; and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 5 to 10 centers per mile.

### Legend:

**Limit:** Maximum number of participants per filed trip. Please call early to make your reservations.

**Difficulty Levels 1 through 5:** 1 equals very low level of exertion, short waling distance, considerable birding from vehicle and possible multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails.

### Reminders:

- Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes.
- bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water
- Avoid wearing bright colors
- bring your binoculars
- don't forget to have FUN!!

*Several of our fall trips may have to be canceled because of forest closings this summer. Be sure to call the leader for current updates.. Callow spring migrants are now hardy survivors, heading south.*

### Saturday, February 8:

**Granite Reef Dam & Lower Salt River.** We will bird the Salt River, below Granite Reef Dam, using cars to cover hot spots along ten miles of road. Excellent area for waterbirds and raptors. There is a lake entry fee. Bring water, lunch and a scope if available. We will meet at 7:30 a.m. at the Walgreen's parking lot at McKellips and Bush Highway. Contact leader for reservations and information.

### Saturday, March 22

**Lost Dutchman State Park.** This beautiful desert park lies at the base of the Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. Bird feeders and baths make locating birds easy. Canyon Towhee and Pyrrhuloxia are regulars here. There is an entry fee at the park. Total of three miles to walk. Bring a lunch. Call leader for information and reservations.

## AZ's SPECIAL SPECIES, BLACK HAWK

By Jim Burns



Soaring above the clouds, hunting on the wing, screaming with defiance! This sounds like the classic perception of "buteo" from some word association game. But as birders we are drawn to those species which are notably different from others in their own order, family, or genus. What makes Arizona special to us is that most of its special species, species found only here or more easily here than in any other state, fall into this category.

Common Black Hawk, *Buteogallus anthracinus*, doesn't soar very much, splashes around in creekbeds, and calls with a series of squeaky, staccato whistles--a very different kind of buteo. It's not "common" either, at least north of the border, but the species name, *anthracinus*, is right on--coal black. It is a common to fairly common resident along both coastal ranges in Mexico from southern Sonora and southern Tamaulipas south to El Salvador and Honduras. In the interior of Mexico it is locally common along rivers.

Common Black Hawks might disappear from the state. It was hoped this species would "learn" to fish. It is now well known that they take all manner of small fish, lizards, snakes, and even small birds and mammals. On the Atlantic coast of Mexico the species inhabits mangrove swamps and crabs along the beaches and mudflats.

Unlike many of our special species, Common Black Hawk is probably more plentiful and more easily observed close to home here in central Arizona than in the southeastern part of the state, primarily because the bird does not breed in the "hotspots" where all the birders go. For many years there has been at least one pair nesting along Lower Camp Creek, ten miles northeast of Carefree on Cave Creek Road. Another easy way to observe this species is to hang out on any of the bridges over the Verde River in the Verde Valley area where the accompanying photograph was taken in July, 1999.

In the southeast the best places are

AZ Special Species







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# The Cactus Wren-Dition

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**Rufous-backed Robin**

photographed by **Jim Burns** at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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## FIELD OBSERVATIONS - SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2002

By Janet Witzeman

Pacific Loon, seldom recorded in the county, was observed with a Com. Loon on Apache Lake Nov. 3 (NM). Individual Com. Loons were also reported on the Gila River at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. Oct. 26 (TCO) and at one of the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Nov. 1 (BG). Larger than usual numbers of Am. White Pelicans were seen at several locations: two at the "Jaeger Pond" at Paloma Sept. 11, increased to 90 on Sept. 21, and six were still present there Oct. 8 (BG *et al.*); three behind Gillespie Dam Nov. 2 increased to 25 on Nov. 14 (MR *et al.*); 72 were counted at the 91<sup>st</sup> Ave. Ponds Nov. 2 and 35 at the 83<sup>rd</sup> Ave. Pond Nov. 6 (MR); 16 flew over the Desert Botanical Garden Nov. 18 (TCh), 19 were reported on the Gila River at El Mirage Rd. Nov. 20 (KM,MV), and one was seen near Granite Reef Dam Nov. 28 (MR).

Numbers of Brown Pelicans continued to be seen and stayed later than usual: one was reported at the "Jaeger Pond" Sept. 11 (BG), two were observed on the golf course at I-10 and Maricopa Rd. (MD), one was still present on Luna Lake in the White Mts. Sept. 25 (SH), one was seen at the Cobble Ponds on the late date of Nov. 3 (PM,CD), and late individuals remained at Chaparral Lake in Indian Bend Wash and at Tempe Town Lake at least to Nov. 30 (JiB,PM,CD). Twelve Neotropical Cormorants were seen in a new area with 21 Double-crested Cormorants, at the pond at Hayden and Camelback Roads in Scottsdale Nov. 9 (TCO). At least two continued to be seen at Chaparral Lake in Scottsdale Nov. 17 (JWV).

An immature **Tricolored Heron**, discovered at the pond s. of Ocotillo Rd. in Gilbert Sept. 15 (JiB), remained at least until Sept. 25 (RWd,AV,BD); there have been only ten previous county records. Another Tricolored

The Gray Hawk, that spent the summer at Paloma Ranch, remained at least until Sept. 21 (BG). A juvenile Red-shouldered Hawk was discovered near the Colorado River south of Yuma Nov. 4 (HM,DL). Individual Merlins were reported at the Hassayampa River Preserve (hereafter HRP) Oct. 6 (PM,CD), near Gila Farms Pond Oct. 13 (RJ), at Phon D. Sutton Oct. 19 (PM,CD), and near 107<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Buckeye Oct. 27 (PM,CD). Four Blue Grouse were found at Sunrise in the White Mts. Sept. 13 (CBa,BJ). A Sandhill Crane was reported at the "Jaeger Pond" Oct. 8 (HD), and between 10 and 32 were counted in fields near Arlington Oct. 12-27 (MR,BG). Two Am. Golden Plovers were found in a field near Arlington Oct. 27-28 (BG,MS). A Snowy Plover was observed at Gila Farms Pond Sept. 1 (PD). Two Sanderlings were observed at Gila Farms Pond Sept. 23 (JeB) and one was still present there Sept. 24 (PD); another individual was found at Luna Lake in the White Mts. Sept. 25 (SH). Individual Short-billed Dowitchers were observed at Kachina Wetlands, s. of Flagstaff Sept. 4 (GR) and at Gila Farms Pond Sept. 21 (PD).

A **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was discovered in a Paloma Ranch field Sept. 11 (BG) and photographed Sept. 12 (RJ), providing the first documented record for the county and state. Amazing but true, a second **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** was discovered at the Sod Farm near Alma School Rd. and McDonald Dr. Sept. 22 (RJ) and remained at least until Sept. 29 (GR *et al.*).

A Franklin's Gull was observed at a Lower River Rd. pond in Palo Verde Oct. 27 (PM,CD). A Bonaparte's Gull was seen on Roosevelt Lake Nov. 4-5 (JE,RWd,BD,AV). Individual California Gulls were reported at Ganado in n.e. Arizona Sept. 27 (CBa,BJ), in the Bill

## FIELD OBSERVATIONS - SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2002

(Continued from Page 9)

By Janet Witzeman

A Botanical Garden Nov. 15 (R&JWz), was still present the end of November (TCh). A *Selasphorus* hummingbird (sp.?) was observed at BTA on the late date of Nov. 3 (TCO).

Individual Lewis's Woodpeckers were observed at the HRP Oct. 6 (PM,CD) and at BTA Oct. 15 (RD). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was seen at BTA Oct. 13-15 (TMC,RD). A Red-naped/Red-breasted hybrid Sapsucker was reported at Mesquite Wash Oct. 19 (TCO). Individual "Yellow-shafter" type No. Flickers were seen in Queen Creek Canyon Oct. 13 (TMC), at BTA Oct. 17-18 (JBa,MS), and on Lower River Rd. Oct. 27 (PM,CD).

A Greater Pewee, an uncommon transient, was heard singing on Mt. Ord Sept. 1 (DPe). A Dusky Flycatcher was heard calling at Mesquite Wash on the late date of Oct. 19 (TCO). A Pacific-slope Flycatcher was found at Camp Creek Oct. 5 (TCO,TMC). An E. Phoebe, found along the Agua Fria River below Lake Pleasant Oct. 26 (JBa), was still present there Nov. 2 (TCO) and another individual was seen at the Cobble Ponds Oct. 27 (PM,CD). A Cassin's Kingbird, seen at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the Gila River Oct. 12 (CBa), was at a lower than usual elevation. An **Eastern Kingbird** was discovered at Paloma Sept. 14-15 (PM,CD). A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was discovered w. of Painted Rock Dam Rd., Sept. 12 (RD) and was still present Sept. 14 (PM,CD).

A No. Shrike was observed along Hwy 60, w. of Hwy 98 in n. Arizona Nov. 1 (CL). A Bell's Vireo was seen at BTA on the late date of Oct. 18 (MS). A Cassin's Vireo was reported at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the Gila River Oct. 12 (CBa). A **Red-eyed Vireo** was discovered at Ganado Sept. 27 (CBa,BJ).

previous state records. A **Rufous-backed Robin** was discovered at BTA Nov. 8 (CR) and was still present there in early January (m.ob.). Individual Gray Catbirds were reported along the Agua Fria River Oct. 26 (JBa), in Cave Creek Oct. 28-Nov. 3 (SL), and at Apache Lake campground Nov. 3 (NM). For the third consecutive fall/winter, a Brown Thrasher has been found at BTA; this fall one was first seen Nov. 6 (JiB) and was still present Nov. 30 (m.ob.).

A number of interesting warblers were recorded during the fall. A Tennessee Warbler was found at the Phoenix Zoo Oct. 5 and remained at least until Oct. 15 (RJ *et al.*). A N. Parula was observed in Eager Sept. 13 (CBa,BJ). A female N. Parula was found at Tres Rios Sept. 19 (JT,BP) and two males were found there Oct. 26, one of which was still present in December (TCO,PM,CD,CBa). A Yellow Warbler was seen at the Pavilions Shopping Center in Scottsdale on the late date of Nov. 9 (TCO). A **Magnolia Warbler**, discovered at the Phoenix Zoo Oct. 11 (RJ), provided the sixth record for Maricopa County. Individual "Myrtle" forms of Yellow-rumped Warbler were reported at the Gilbert Water Ranch Nov. 9 (MS) and along upper Camp Creek Nov. 16 (TCO). Individual Black-and-white Warblers were seen at the Desert Botanical Garden Sept. 29 (JBa), at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the Gila River Oct. 12 (CBa), and along the Agua Fria River Nov. 2 (TCO). Individual Am. Redstarts were observed Sept. 19 at Whitlow Dam and Eldorado Park, Scottsdale ((JBa). A **Prothonotary Warbler** was discovered in front of the new Municipal Court Bldg. On Washington in downtown Phoenix Sept. 15 (JM) and remained at least until Sept. 22 (RD). There were only four previous Maricopa County records.

Heron was found in Apache Junction Sept. 15 (MM). Two **Reddish Egrets** were discovered at the "Jaeger Pond" at Paloma Oct. 12 (HD) and another individual, a first year bird, was found at Paloma Ranch Headquarters Oct. 12 (TCo,TMc); there were only five previous county records. The Reddish Egret, found in Yuma Aug. 31, remained at least until Sept. 12 (DPa).

Four Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were reported on a farm pond at 107<sup>th</sup> and Broadway Rd. Oct. 7 (DS), one was seen in El Dorado Park in Scottsdale Nov. 12 at least to Nov. 17 (JWo), and a large group of 100 were observed on the 83<sup>rd</sup> Ave. Pond Nov. 20 (KM,MV). A Ross's Goose was reported at the El Mirage Pond Nov. 20 (KM,MV), three were observed on the Lower River Rd. ponds with a Snow Goose Nov. 23 (PM,CD), and five were seen in a field near the Lower River Rd ponds with four Snow Geese Nov. 29 (TCo). A **Tundra Swan**, a casual winter visitor, was discovered at the El Mirage Pond Nov. 23 (TCo).

A Wood Duck was reported at the Gilbert Neely Ranch Sept. 15 (RH) and a pair were seen at the Tres Rios Hayfield site Nov. 20 (KM). One Eurasian Wigeon was back at a McCormick Ranch pond by Nov. 9 (TCo). Individual Greater Scaup were found at the "Jaeger Pond" Nov. 2 (CBa,SS) and at the ASU Research Park Nov. 10 (DC). A female **Surf Scoter**, a rare transient, was discovered at the "Jaeger" Pond Oct. 25 and remained at least until Nov. 1 (BG), three were reported on Roosevelt Lake Nov. 4 (JE), and two were seen on Luna Lake in the White Mts. Oct. 18 (*fide* MS). A **White-winged Scoter** was found below Davis Dam Nov. 19 (MS) and four were seen with a Barrow's Goldeneye below Parker Dam Nov. 30 (CB,SS).

Williams Delta Nov. 30 and on Lake Havasu Nov. 30 (CBa,SS). Individual Herring Gulls were seen at a pond on Lower River Rd. Nov. 23 (PM,CD), at the Bill Williams Delta Nov. 30 and on Lake Havasu Nov. 30 (CBa,SS). A Sabine's Gull was found at the White Mts. Reservoir, e. of Sunrise Sept. 12 (GR). Three Com. Terns were observed in the Tonto Creek arm of Roosevelt Lake Sept. 4 (GR), one was seen at Becker Lake Sept. 12 (GR), one was reported at the Gila Bend Sewage Ponds Sept. 14 (PM,CD), and one was found at the Neely Ranch Pond in Gilbert Sept. 22 (RH).

Between three and four Eurasian Collared-Doves were observed at Paloma Sept. 14-21 (PM,CD,BG) and another individual was reported in Gisela Sept. 28 (JE). Individual late-staying White-winged Doves were seen at Paloma Ranch Headquarters Oct. 2 (TCo,TMc) and at Papago Park Oct. 12 (LB). One Ruddy Ground-Dove was observed at Paloma Sept. 14 (PM,CD), four were reported at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers Sept. 21 (BG), six were found at the Gilbert Water Ranch Oct. 20 and three were still present there Oct. 31 (RD).

A Burrowing Owl was observed in a Scottsdale yard Sept. 15 (JBa). A Com. Poorwill was reported in downtown Phoenix near Van Buren and Central Ave. Sept. 5-6 (BG). A male Broad-billed Hummingbird was observed at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (hereafter BTA) from Sept. 21 to Nov. 28 (SG,RD,CT) and another male, found at the Desert

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There was a small invasion of Steller's Jays into the lowlands during the fall. One was seen in a yard in Gisela Sept. 26 and by Oct. 11 there were four there (JE); two were found at Camp Creek Oct. 5 (TCo,TMc); one was observed at BTA from Oct. 6 at least to Nov. 3 (RD,CT). one was in a Peoria yard Oct. 29 (RR), one was in a Sunnyslope yard from Oct. 25 at least to Nov. 25 (PH), and one was seen along the Agua Fria River below Lake Pleasant Nov. 2 (TCo). W. Scrub Jays too were more widespread than usual. Beginning the third week in September through November, individuals were reported at Paloma Ranch, BTA, Wickenburg, Camp Creek, Mesquite Wash, Agua Fria River below Lake Pleasant, and Sunnyslope (TCo,SG,BG,PH,TMc). Rounding out the corvid invasion was a **Clark's Nutcracker** at BTA Nov. 6-14 (RD,MR,JIB,LH).

The following species were found at lower than usual elevations. A Bridled Titmouse was observed along the Agua Fria River, below Lake Pleasant Nov. 2 (TCo). A Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen at Granite Reef Picnic Area on the early date of Sept. 15 (PM,CD), one was reported at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers Sept. 21 (BG), two were seen at Camp Creek Oct. 5 (TCo,TMc), two were reported at BTA Oct. 13 (TMC), and one was seen at Lake Pleasant Oct. 24 (HM). Individual Brown Creepers were observed at Whitlow Dam Sept. 19 (JBa), along the Agua Fria River Nov. 2 (TCo), and at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the Gila River Nov. 23 (TCo). Individual **Winter Wrens** were discovered at Granite Reef Picnic Area on the early date of Sept. 15 (PM,CD) and in Tempe on the early date of Sept. 25 (DPe).

A **Wood Thrush** was discovered at BTA Oct. 20 (CW) and remained at least until Nov. 3 (m.ob). There have been 18

A surprising four **Grasshopper Sparrows** were discovered in a ditch by cotton fields near GFP Oct. 13 (RJ), and two other individuals were found in a Paloma Ranch field Oct. 25 (BG) and at the Gilbert Water Ranch Oct. 27 (JWo). There were only nine previous Maricopa County records. Larger than usual numbers of Fox Sparrows were reported. Individual "Slate-colored" forms were reported at Granite Reef Picnic Area Oct. 5 (PM,CD) and at BTA Oct. 27 (SBa). By Nov. 10 there were two "Slate-colored" forms of Fox Sparrow at BTA (CBe) and they remained into December (m.ob.). A more unusual form in Arizona, a "Sooty" Fox Sparrow, was discovered at BTA Oct. 26 (PM,CD), two were reported there Nov. 2 (JIB), and one remained into December (m.ob.).

A Swamp Sparrow was found at Mesquite Wash Oct. 19 (TCo). Two White-throated Sparrows were observed in Gisela Oct. 11 and one was found at BTA Nov. 13 (*fide* LH), two were seen there Nov. 22 (JIB), and one remained at least until Nov. 25 (TMC). A "Slate-colored" form of Dark-eyed Junco was seen at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers Sept. 21 (BG) and another one was found along upper Camp Creek Nov. 16 (TCo). An early McCown's Longspur was observed at the Sod Farm near Alma School Rd. and McDonald Dr. Sept. 22, and 15 were counted there with two Chestnut-collared Longspurs Oct. 13 (RJ).

The Pyrrhuloxia returned to the Desert Botanical Garden Sept. 20 for the second consecutive fall/winter and was still present there in late December (TCh). A first year Rose-breasted Grosbeak was observed at the Phoenix Zoo Oct. 22 (RJ). An immature female Painted

[\(Continued on Page 11\)](#)





# The Cactus Wren-Dition

Spring 2003 • Volume 27, No. 1



Rufous-Backed Robin

photographed by **Jim Burns** at Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park in Arizona in December, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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## FIELD OBSERVATIONS - SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER 2002

(Continued from Page 10)

By Janet Witzeman

Bunting was found at Granite Reef Picnic Area Sept. 1 (SG,RJ).

Individual Dickcissels were reported at the "Jaeger" Pond Sept. 11 (BG), at the Hubble Trading Post and along the So. Fork of the Little Colorado River in n.e. Arizona Sept. 12 (GR), in Gisela Sept. 25-26 (JE), and at the El Mirage Pond Oct. 5-6 (JWo *et al.*). A **Common Grackle** was discovered in a pasture north of Roosevelt Lake Nov. 4 (KR) and on Nov. 5, three were reported there (RWd,BD,AV). Numbers of Lawrence's Goldfinches were observed in Gisela from Sept. 23 to Oct. 11 (JE), south of Yuma Oct. 26 (HD), and at the campground by Apache Lake Nov. 3 (NM); two were seen at Slate Creek Divide Sept. 24 (KM,MV) and one was observed at 115<sup>th</sup> Ave. and the Gila River Oct. 26 (TCO).

A few highlights from s.e. Arizona during the fall were: a **Great-crested Flycatcher** was found in Portal Sept. 17 (RWe), a **Prairie Warbler** was discovered at the Snyder Hill Sewage Ponds in Tucson Oct. 26 (TMC), and a **Scarlet Tanager** was found in Portal Oct. 24 (RWe).

Unusual birds seen in Rocky Point, Mexico Nov. 17 were a Golden-crowned Kinglet which is

rare in Sonora and a Black-throated Green Warbler, the first seen there since 1956 (SG,RJ).

**Abbreviations:** Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gila Farms Pond (GFP), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m.ob).

**Observers:** Charles Babbitt, Steve Barlow, Jack Bartley, Chris Benesh, Linda Bielek, Jeff Brake, Jim Burns, Tillie Chew, Dale Clark, Troy Corman, Bix Demaree, Henry Detwiler, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Cynthia Donald, Margaret Dyekman, Jeff Estis, Steve Ganley, Bill Grossi, Liz Hatcher, Stuart Healy, Paul Hershberger, Ron Huetter, Bud Johnson, Roy Jones, Chuck LaRue, Diane Laush, Shawna Lawry, Tracy McCarthy, James McKay, Keith Mellon, Henry Messing, Norma Miller, Mike Moore, Pete Moulton, Dick Palmer, Dave Pearson, Brandon Percival, Kurt Rademaker, Christian Reay, Regina Rogers, Gary Rosenberg, Mike Rupp, Sig Stangeland, Mark Stevenson, Diana Stuart, Carl Tomoff, Jolan Truan, Anita VanAuken, Marceline VandeWater, Richard Webster, Russ Widner, Cathy Wise, Robert Witzeman, Joe Woodley.

## Photo Quiz Answers

By Jim Burns

Back in June when Shawna Lawry was slating up her Texas after the great cormorant debate (see why the common names for specific birds should ALWAYS be capitalized!), Maricopa County birders should have been lining up to take her out for a real meal. Here in the desert we don't see many cormorants and we don't see any on a regular basis. The series of June sightings and Rich Ditch's great cormorant photos (now you see?) should have gotten our attention and enhanced our cormorant skills. Let's see if you did your homework and how you're doing?

If you have studied the geographic distribution of cormorants and if you've ever stood along the California coast or even along the river bank west of Phoenix and looked at mixed flocks of cormorants flying over, you're aware of two things: color isn't as important as structure; and comparative flight jizz may be most important of all. Like some other families of birds (pelagics and raptors come to mind), distant flying cormorants may be easier to identify than close roosting ones.

### A) Good Photo, Easy Bird

Since we don't have flight shots, this is about as diagnostic a cormorant photo as we'll ever get because it provides unobstructed profile views of several key family structural characteristics. Let's take it from the top left and work down through the five features which should become routine roosting cormorant checkpoints for you. This bird has a long bill, a rounded crown, a thick neck, a heavy body, and a short tail. If you're uncomfortable assigning these adjective to a lone bird, go ahead and compare its body parts with those visible on the remaining three birds in the quiz. The five modifiers still seem to work when used in comparison to others in the family.

in the Valley we should run through this structural litany first. Double-crested is noticeably larger cormorant than Neotropic, eight to ten inches longer with a foot longer wingspan. It has a longer bill, larger head, thicker neck, heavier body, but shorter tail than Neotropic. Separating the tow species sounds easy and, in flight, it is relatively easy with a little comparative experience.

In flight Double-crested's head and neck extension will be twice the length of its shorter tail, whereas on flying Neotropics head and neck extension is the same length as tail extension. In a personal comment Pete Moulton observes that in-flight Neotropics always remind him of Anhingas because of the long tail and slender head/neck profile. Nonetheless, because Double-crested a Neotropic superficially resemble one another, identifying individual roosting birds is much more difficult. There are five plumage characteristics that may help.

The most important of these and the easiest to discern is color of the lores. In all plumages, Double-crested Cormorant will have orange lores (the area of bare skin and small, sparse feathers between the eye and the bill), Neotropic dark lores. On juvenile birds (remember the light breast coloration tells us this is a sub-adult bird) the D-c bill will be orange, Neotropic dark. On D-c's the gular sac (the bare skin below the mouth) is rounded and shows no border on the orange, on Neotropics tapered to a point and bordered with white, a feature much more obvious in breeding plumage. And lastly, given good views, D-s's will show rounded scapular tips, Neotropics bluntly pointed.

## CAREFREE CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SUMMARY

December 30, 2002



The eleventh annual Carefree Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, December 30, 2002. Some 58 field observers and 15 feeder watchers teamed up to record 103 species and 11,501 individual birds (we like to be exact). These are not record totals but they are above average for us.

New species for the count were Gadwall, Northern Rough-winged Swallow (2), Rufous-backed Robin, Varied Thrush and Yellow-headed Blackbird (70). The Gadwall was spotted at the Rancho Manana Golf Club in the Town of Cave Creek while the other birds were found at various places along Cave Creek between Seven Springs and the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.

Species noted on the count for just the second time were Canada Goose, Plumbeous Vireo and Lawrence's Goldfinch. Ring-necked Duck, Bushtit, Black-throated Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow were present in record numbers.

We returned to the Satisfied Frog Restaurant in Cave Creek for our compilation dinner. This year we were careful not to let our hard won field data slip down between the floorboards. I am grateful to all of the Maricopa Audubon members who set aside valuable holiday time to support this count.

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We could next do a part by part process of elimination on the six, but let's just skip right away to the one obvious plumage feature in our first photo, the white throat patch. Only Great Cormorant (now you see!) and Brandt's Cormorant will show this extensive light throat feathering. Great Cormorant, a Canadian maritime breeder, has a flat crown and a yellow chin which, even in black and white, would show as a light area of contrast between white throat and gray bill.

This Brandt's Cormorant, a non-breeding adult (note the lack of neck plumes and the dark breast), was photographed in Pacific Grove, California in October, 1991. Brandt's is our largest west coast cormorant. Would Brandt's be possible along the Scottsdale Greenbelt? To my knowledge there are no Arizona records, but in summer it ranges to the north end of the Gulf of California. I saw my first Great Cormorant on a freshwater inland lake in Florida. Anything's possible!

### B) Good Photo, Difficult Bird

Alright, let's repeat the drill of for our second bird: short bill relative to Brandt's but not as flat as the birds' in the third photo; thinner neck relative to the Brandt's, though it is somewhat more extended here; skinny little body; long tail relative to Brandt's and relative to its own body length. This is not a Brandt's. Nor a Great.

Plumage features should help us eliminate Pelagic Cormorant and Red-faced Cormorant, the two small-headed, slender-necked, thin-billed members of the family. Except in breeding plumage, and our quiz bird certainly isn't showing any ear tufts or neck plumes, Pelagic has an all dark bill, face, and breast. It is the smallest of our cormorants, pencil-necked and very thinned-billed. Red-faced has a yellow bill which might match our bird, but even in juvenile plumage it has a dark breast, whereas the breast on this bird appears somewhat mottled, lighter than the rest of its body, certainly lighter than the dark breast of the Brandt's.

So, we've come down to Double-crested or Neotropic. This is the same dilemma posed by Rich's web photographs of the Charthouse bird in Scottsdale last June and, in fact, this is the same bird, probably photographed on the same pipe head, a few days after Rich was there. Structural features provide good clues in separating Double-crested from Neotropic, but some if not all can be inconclusive without the species side by side.

Since Double-crested and Neotropic are the pair we should expect to have to separate here

Let's score our second bird on these five features. There certainly is no contrast between the color of the lores and the color of the crown. Score on for Neotropic. Though the gular sac itself is obviously lighter, there is no apparent contrast between bill color and crown. If this is a Double-crested, it is not a juvenile. The rear border of the gular sack looks pointed until compared with the two birds in the third photo. Then its most closely matches the left-hand bird which has a rounded gular sac compared to its companion. But, since this is a sub-adult, we're not sure how fully developed this feature may be. Score this as inconclusive. There is definitely a thin line of white feathering developing along the border of the gular sac and the two scapular feathers we can see appear more pointed than the scapulars we can see on the left-hand bird in the final photo. Score Neotropic on these two features.

### C) Bad Photo, Easy Bird

Serious photographers are typically equal parts teck geek and control freak. While I can't claim much of the former, I must admit a huge ration of the latter. Imagine my frustration when my photo lab ruined the best diagnostic photo I have ever taken. This third photo looks grainy and dark because I've tried to salvage in Photoshop an image so under-exposed I wouldn't even try to use it in a slide presentation. I asked the labe for a push and it didn't happen-human error I was told.

The big, hulking cormorant on the left with the obvious orange lores and the rounded gular sac and scapular feathers is Double-crested. Its little companion with the pointed, white bordered gular sac is a Neotropic. Both adult birds, this lucky side-by-side comparison shot was taken at Patagonia Lake State Park back in February, 1998 when Neotropics still went by "Olivaceous." any questions?

Well...yes, there are. On close inspection the D-c is this photo shows a very thin, faint line of white along the lower rear portion of the gular sac. And the Neotropic has a bit of light suffusion in from of its eye. There is no question as to the identity of these two birds, but these two points place a shadow of doubt in my mind regarding the consensus for immature Neotropic that developed on the Charthouse bird. If it hadn't been for the proportionately short bill and long tail of our plumage considerations as always!) I

wouldn't have joined this  
consensus. See how difficult this  
can be. Thanks Shawna. I think.

Photo

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