



The Cactus Wren • dition

Volume LIXI, No. 1

Spring 2009



Brown Thrasher

Maricopa Audubon Meetings & Programs Feb. 2009 – March 2009

Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, September through May. Our May meeting is our Annual Banquet at Shalimar Country Club.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden. The Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix, which is approximately ½ mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. Although there is no charge to attend our general membership meetings, the Annual Banquet does require a dinner reservation and associated cost.

A pre-meeting dinner will be held at Rolling Hills (formerly Pete's) 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue in Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) for the September through April meet-

ings. Come and join us at 6:00 p.m. for a delicious meal (no-host), meet our guest speaker and say "howdy" to other birders. Meals average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

PROGRAM SCHEDULE FOR SPRING 2009

February 3, 2009

Jim Burns Jim Burns' Arizona Birds
Cactus Wren-dition writer/photographer Jim Burns will present images and stories from his book about Arizona's Special Bird Species which was published by the University of Arizona Press in March, 2008. Jim's engaging manner, subtle humor and extraordinary photographs are always a crowd pleaser.

March 3, 2009

Doug Alexander The Birds of New Zealand
New Zealand is a country of beautiful vistas, unusual birds and other wildlife. Doug Alexander's program of a month long trip there in 2007 with wife Elaine focuses on New Zealand National Parks, wildlife and ecology. Bats are the only native mammals. The Maori Polynesians and Europeans introduced mammals and extensive farming that ravaged the island ecology. Doug is a nature photographer and a self taught naturalist. He began photographing nature at age 16, and has traveled to all the continents of the world. He has presented programs on Costa Rica, the Galapagos Islands and Antarctica for the Maricopa Audubon Society.

April 7, 2009

Dr. Gerald Rosenthal Sonoran Desert Life: Understanding, Insights, and Enjoyment

Gerald A. Rosenthal, Scottsdale resident and retired Professor of Biological Sciences and Toxicology, spent a decade observing and documenting the flora and fauna of the Sonoran Desert. He has compiled his knowledge into an informative and lavishly illustrated field guide with an emphasis on botany. Dr. Rosenthal will share some of his many images that are part of his research and stitch together the web of life of this unique ecosystem.

May 5, 2009

Paul Bannick The Owl and The Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds
Award-winning photographer Paul Bannick will take you on a visual journey of 11 key North American habitats through the needs of North America's owl and woodpecker species. This stunning photographic study will be accompanied by field stories, and rich natural history derived from thousands of hours in the field. His talk will look at the way owls and woodpeckers define and enrich their habitat and how their life-histories are intertwined. Mr. Bannick works full time for Conservation Northwest, an environmental organization dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies and the biodiversity of these areas.

NOTE: The May program will be associated with our Annual Banquet. Check our web site, newsletter, or contact a board member for location information.

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"Man's greatest joy is to teach the love of nature." Anon

An Investment in the Future

Bequests are an important source of support for the Maricopa Audubon Society. Your chapter has dedicated itself to the protection of the natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

You can invest in the future of our natural world by making a bequest in your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society. Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.



Brown Thrasher in Pyracantha, photographed by Jim Burns, at Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park, December, 2008 with Canon 1D-Mill body and Canon 600mm f4 lens.

From the Editor, Deva Burns

The reason your Spring copy of the Wren-dition is so late is because Jim and I spent 10 days in Yellowstone in January. My family still can't believe that this trip was my idea. I hate cold weather!

The mind numbing cold is palpable, intense, and painful, but the beauty is so hard to describe with mere words. We were there during a time of uncommonly clear skies and "warm" weather. Our lowest temperature was only -15°. We received an email from our guide who told us that 2 days after we left, the interior (Old Faithful area) was experiencing -35° to -45° temperatures! I just can't imagine how the animals survive. Of course, the thermal activity is a major part of the equation.

We saw Bison, many so thin that they surely will not survive until Spring. We saw Elk, Bighorn Sheep, Mule Deer, White Tail Deer, Coyotes, Wolves, Foxes, and River Otter. The diversity



of wildlife in these extreme conditions is incredibly mind boggling. I would have loved to have seen it 100 years ago. Bird diversity is somewhat limited in winter, of course, but we did see Trumpeter Swan, both Barrow's and Common Goldeneye, Bald Eagle and Golden Eagle, Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawk, American Dipper, and Snow Bunting. Ravens were ubiquitous and always noted for the possibility they were on their way to a winter kill or a wolf kill. There were White-winged

Crossbills being seen in the park, but we missed them. Our tour guide who lives in Gardiner, just outside the park, was hosting flocks of Pinon Jays and rosy-finches at his feeders. This past week the rosy-finch flock has numbered 3000!

If you ever get the chance to go to Yellowstone in the winter, by all means do it, even if you hate winter weather. It is a spectacular environment you will never forget.

Herb's Meanderings: It Just Had To Be The Pishing

Herb Fibel

As I write this, it is January 14th. The sky is clear, and my outdoor thermometer indicates that it is close to 80 degrees. When I walked over to the bank a few minutes ago, there were a couple of people in my apartment complex pool. Amazing! Another season's Christmas Bird Counts are now behind us, and personally I can hardly wait until they start again next year. Did you get a chance to participate in any? I did three. For an unforgettable experience, I urge you to plan on participating in at least one next Christmas season. One count comes to mind; the Greater Phoenix (Salt-Verde) Count, from whence cometh the subtitle to this article! Six of us, Craig Fischer, Dominick D'Agosto, Peggy Booth, Bill Leggett, Rich Gaffney, and I, drew Area X, which included Coon Bluff and Phon D. Sutton, on the south side of the Salt. I divided the group into two teams; Craig, Dominick, and Richard

in one and Bill, Peggy, and me in the other. Group One canvassed Phon D. Sutton, while my group checked out Coon Bluff. I don't think we saw any Yellow-rumps, Orange-crowns, and maybe one Verdin in our area. When we met and swapped areas at 11:00 a.m., we learned that Yellow-rumps, Verdins and Orange-crowns were everywhere at Phon D. Sutton, practically pest birds. When we joined up again at 3:00 p.m., they had tallied dozens of Yellow-rumps, Orange-crowns and Verdins at Coon Bluff, while we found almost none of the above at Phon D. Sutton. Rich Gaffney mentioned that it must have been due to Craig's constant "pishing!" Next year I plan to have my pishing technique in perfect pitch well ahead of time.

Who says birding can no longer be exciting when you live in an apartment? Recently a Peregrine chased an immature Harris's Hawk away from the top of the nearby National Bank

Building. Later I was a closeup witness to a pair of Kestrels working the large grassy area outside my back window.

I have lived in Arizona since 1962. When I tell people that, they frequently say: "You must have seen a lot of changes since you came here." The change has been so gradual, though, that I have honestly hardly noticed it. Recently, though, two changes have rocked my world. The first is the demise of the East Valley Tribune in Tempe—no more Celebrity Cipher, no more Vent, no more Sudoku, no more local letters to the editor, no more East Valley obituaries to scan, and no more favorite comic strips. I'm having trouble coping with this. The other change is the soon to occur change in the way we receive our television signal. I've covered myself on that one, but I resent having to pay to watch commercial television via a cable.

Your 2009 MAS Board Nominating Committee

Pursuant to our Bylaws, it is the duty of the president, with the advice and consent of the Board of Directors, to select a Nominating Committee consisting of no less than three non-current Board Members, and publish their names and phone numbers in the Cactus Wren-edition prior to the annual Board of Directors elections. This year the Board of Directors elections will take place at the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, April 7, 2009. Any adult member in good standing seeking nomination will have his

or her name placed into nomination by the Nominating Committee. If you are interested, call any one of the following members of the Nominating Committee, and let him or her know of your interest in running for a particular position on the Board. Your name will be placed on the slate as a candidate for that position, and your candidacy will be announced by the Nominating Committee.

All Board positions except Wren-edition Editor are elected by the membership. Our Bylaws also require that nominations be open from the

floor at our annual elections. As a request, though, to help keep things simple, please let the Nominating Committee person know in advance of your interest if possible. Please do not nominate someone else unless you have his or her consent, and know that he or she is a member in good standing of this Chapter.

This year's nominating committee is:
Doug Green, chairman, (480) 998-5638
Olga Harbour, member, (480) 503-9291
Brian Ison, member, (480) 315-9031

Maricopa Audubon Society Annual Meeting & Banquet

SHALIMAR GOLF CLUB

2032 East Golf Avenue, Tempe, AZ
Tuesday, May 5, 2009

The Maricopa Audubon Society will hold its Annual Meeting and Banquet on Tuesday, May 5, 2009, at Shalimar Golf Club, located at 2032 East Golf Avenue in Tempe, Arizona 85282. This is one block north of Southern Avenue, midway between McClintock Drive and Price Road. You can access Shalimar from Southern Avenue by turning north on either Country Club Way or Fairfield Drive. There is a sign for Shalimar at the intersection of Southern Avenue and Fairfield Drive. If you turn on Country Club Way there is a sign for Shalimar at their back parking lot.

There will be a no-host bar starting at 6:00 p.m. We will have a raffle and silent auction, so plan to arrive early and peruse the raffle and auction tables. Tickets for the raffle will be available at the door.

Our guest speaker this year is award winning wildlife photographer and naturalist Paul

Bannick. Every wild place and urban area in North America hosts an owl or a woodpecker species, while healthy natural places often boast representatives of both. The diversity of these two families of birds, and the ways in which they define and enrich the ecosystems they inhabit, are the subject of Mr. Bannick's vivid new book *The Owl and The Woodpecker: Encounters with North America's Most Iconic Birds*.

The Owl and The Woodpecker showcases a sense of these birds' natural rhythms, as well as the integral spirit of our wild places. Based on thousands of hours in the field photographing these fascinating and wily birds, Bannick evokes all 41 North American species of owls and woodpeckers, across 11 key habitats. And by revealing the impact of two of our most iconic birds, Bannick has created a wholly unique approach to birding and conservation.

Paul works full time for Conservation

Northwest, an environmental organization dedicated to protecting and connecting wild areas from the Pacific Coast to the Canadian Rockies and the biodiversity of these areas. He will be signing copies of his book.

The buffet dinner begins at 7:00 p.m. and reservations are required. We will have a buffet menu with salads, bread, vegetable selections, main course selections, beverages and desserts. The cost once again is \$25.00 (\$22.50) for "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" members. Please contact Herb Fibel at (480) 966-5246 or Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614, laurienessel@gmail.com, to make a reservation. Please indicate the number of people in your party, and provide an e-mail and phone number in case we need to contact you. Payment is made at the door and can be either cash or check. Dress is casual. We look forward to seeing you at the banquet.

Notes & Announcements



New Bird Publication Takes Flight – The University of Nevada Department of English announces the launch of a new creative writing publication with a focus on birds, *The LBJ: Avian Life, Literary Arts*. This biannual publication provides a venue for quality, new work in poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction, as well as full color art. Additionally, each issue features reviews on selected recent avian-oriented books. For more information and to subscribe go to www.literarybirdjournal.org or you can contact Nick Neely, Editor-in-Chief at 650-576-3484 or editor@literarybirdjournal.org. Subscriptions are available to individuals for \$15, or \$25 for 2 years.

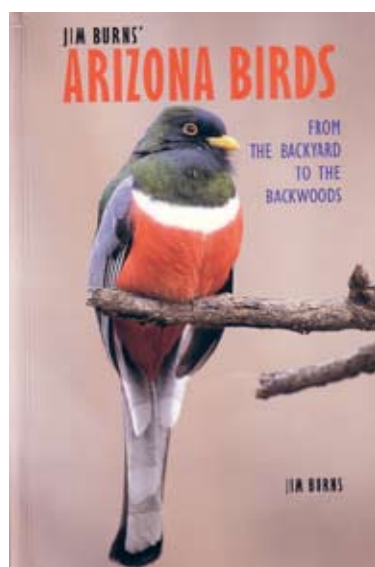
Jim Burns' Arizona Birds – Jim Burns' *Arizona Birds* is a lively portrayal of the habits and habitats of seventy-five unique southwestern species. Burns has written much more than a field guide, site guide, or scientific survey . . . an original kind of birding book that is more at home on your bedside table than in your

backpack . . . illustrated in full color by seventy-five of the author's own outstanding photographs. You can order at <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/BOOKS/bid1948.htm> You can see more of Jim's work at www.jimburnsphotos.com

Films on the environment – If anyone is interested in films on the environment, check out www.eccfilms.com. Look for NAU's *A River Reborn: The Restoration of Fossil Creek*

Flagged Shorebirds Although not common in our area, please be aware of color-flagged Hudsonian Godwits, Whimbrels, and any other shorebird species which you notice have color bands. For more information check out the article in this issue. You can also contact Dave Krueper, Ass't. Nongame Migratory Bird Coordinator, US Fish and Wildlife Service, PO Box 1306, Albuquerque, NM 87103, (505) 248-6877 or dave.krueper@fws.gov

Unwanted catalogues Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalogue works collaboratively with the catalog industry



to embrace voluntary measures to reduce unwanted mail by honoring your mail preferences. Catalog Choice has become a significant consumer voice in the direct mail industry. Nearly 200 catalog mailers are participating in Catalog Choice, and this number grows every day. ? Please go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org/pages/merchants> to reduce the mailing of unwanted catalogs.

Art Classes Audubon Arizona and Scottsdale Artists' School are joining forces this fall to teach beginners how to record birds the way John James Audubon did – by drawing. Three weekend classes in sketching, watercolor, and scientific illustration are offered at \$150 each. For details, go to <http://www.ScottsdaleArtSchool.org> or <http://az.audubon.org> or call Scottsdale Artists' School at 480-990-1422.

E-mail alert system – Maricopa Audubon Society has established an e-mail alert system to notify members of upcoming events and activities. E-mail addresses were obtained from both the "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" roster and the National Audubon roster. There were several addresses that were returned, most likely because the e-mail addresses were not updated. If you would like to be included in or removed from this notification system, please let Jack Follett know at jackfollett@msn.com. The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

Birding Community E-Bulletin – A monthly bulletin with rare bird sightings and other birding information. If you would like to be put on the monthly emailing list please contact either Wayne Petersen (Director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas Program) at 718-259-2178 or wpetersen@massaudubon.org or Paul Baicich at 410-992-9736 or paul.baicich@verizon.net. They never sell the recipient list and you will receive a lot of interesting information.

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge – Belize A new six-cabana, eco-friendly accommodation in Belize - Casa del Caballo Blanco is a 23-acre former ranch 9.5 miles from the Guatemalan border near San Ignacio. It also shelters the not-for-profit Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) (<http://www.casaavian.org/>). Its purpose is to understand and support the biodiversity of Belize that

attracts and sustains over 530 species of migratory and resident birds spotted in a given year. Jodi and Vance Benté, owners of the property, also established The Alliance whose motto is: "Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them continue to sow their seeds." Their work has been undertaken in cooperation with the Government of Belize's efforts to protect critical habitat, the loss of which threatens the avian population. Guests are invited to share in the responsibilities of supporting the avian program. They can assist in nest-box building, maintenance and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit www.casacabaloblanco.com.

Book Store Selections – We now have a selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike. Remember that Friends of Maricopa Audubon members get a 10% discount and that your purchase helps to support our event, education and conservation efforts.

Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA) – Check out their website for events around the state – www.azwildlife.com.

Museum of Northern Arizona – They sponsor Venture trips that explore and discover the Colorado Plateau in the Four Corners area. For more information contact Lisa Lamberson at 928-774-5211 x241 or llamberson@mna.mus.az.us.

Environmental Fund – Green At Work – Thousands of employees

can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about checking off "Green" choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include environmental/conservation groups, please contact Solange Whitehead at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: efaz@efaz.org or (480) 510-5511.

Credit Card – The American Birding Association has negotiated an agreement with US Bank to provide ABA members a distinctive US BANK VISA Card. Using your card will not only show your connection to ABA and birding but also, at no additional cost to you, provide a contribution to ABA. If interested, contact www.americanbirding.org.

The Dovetail Directory (www.dovetailbirding.com): The Directory is an online catalogue of world birding tours, and our goal is to help birders locate that special birding tour, to any of 85 countries around the world. This is a free service. There are no hidden costs or surcharges. Tours are offered at the operators price. In addition to tours, the Directory also carries a comprehensive inventory of birding-related books. For your further convenience we maintain a North American, toll-free number (877) 881-1145, and someone will always happy to take your call.

Shade-grown coffee: If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet

Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co – www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491.

More birding and nature festivals. www.americanbirding.org. and www.birdinghotspot.com.

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts – T-shirt Sale: MAS T-shirts are on sale at cost. Large and XL-\$9.00, XXL- \$12.00. Shipping \$5. Lot's of colors to choose from. Contact Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.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.

Vermilion Flycatcher

Jim Burns

If you're a digital age bird photographer and you're having trouble coping with the various hues you see in the same image viewed on your slide, your monitor, and your print, stop and consider that things really haven't changed all that much. There were a lot of things in Arizona historically tagged with the label "vermilion," but that Spanish word for "red" covered a lot of visual territory. The Vermilion Cliffs, where the initial condor releases took place north of the Grand Canyon, might pass for red if the sun hit them just right, but they're definitely on the blue side of the red spectrum. If you want to see the opposite side of that spectrum, the yellow side, find a Vermilion Flycatcher. Now that's red!

Pyrocephalus rubinus is eye candy red, and the scientific name doubly reflects this. The genus name is Latin from the Greek for "fire" and "head," and the species name is Latin for "red." Would that all our English common names were that graphic. Various authors have described this red as "brilliant" and "striking," and even the placid and unexcitable David Sibley is moved to use the term "unmistakable" next to his painting of the adult male.

As if this knockout plumage weren't enough, the little male firehead also performs a unique and spectacular courtship display in which he helicopters up from a prominent perch, red breast feathers fluffed out, red crest raised, hovers like a butterfly on hyper wingbeats, then flutters slowly down again before the female, all the while repeatedly singing his staccato, accelerating, ascending "p-p-p-pit-pit-pit-a-WHEE" song which, don't forget, is superficially similar to that of the Buff-collared Nightjar. Now that's unmistakable!

Though neither rare nor even uncommon in its preferred habitat, Vermilion Flycatchers are not so common that even the most jaded lister will not stop and admire when an adult male is seen flycatching, sallying out from an exposed perch, typically six to twenty feet high, to capture passing insects, often returning to the same or a nearby vantage point. This species, like the phoebes, will frequently dip or pump its tail while waiting for passing prey.

Like other flycatchers, Vermilions capture prey in their bills and are known to take small beetles, wasps and, particularly, bees. Vermilions also "ground sally," dropping from perch to ground for prey such as grasshoppers. Like many others in this family, Vermilions are known to cast

up pellets containing the indigestible parts of its insect prey.

The preferred habitat for this species is open to semi-open arid country with scattered bushes and small trees, usually along streams or near ponds. Vermilions can at times be found in grasslands or open desert, but there must be a few taller perches from which to hunt. They are often found in relatively thick mesquite bosques along riparian areas of the southwest, and stock ponds seem also to be favored territory perhaps, dare I suggest it, because of the flies attracted to the large quantity of cow pies usually found in such areas.

Vermilions build a cup nest of twigs and grasses placed in a horizontal fork of a tree. Although nest building is strictly a female affair, males apparently do some of the incubation. Three eggs is the average, two weeks is the average hatching time, and another two weeks is the average time before nestlings leave the nest. There are usually two broods per year.

Vermilion Flycatchers breed from the

southwestern U.S. south to Argentina, and they live on the Galapagos Islands. Here in the states they breed locally in southeastern California (Morongo Valley), across central and southern Arizona, southern New Mexico, and south Texas. Across most of this range they are permanent residents, but there is some withdrawal southward and to lower elevations in winter. In fall there is some dispersal westward to the southern California coast and eastward along the Gulf coast where Vermilions will overwinter, occasionally as far east as Florida.

In Arizona Vermilion territories may be established in the drier, warmer, low desert areas as early as March. Best places to look in central Arizona are in the recreation areas adjoining the Verde River east of Phoenix and at the Nature Conservancy's Hassayampa Preserve south of Wickenburg. The rest area just south of the preserve usually hosts a nesting pair. Northward, this species can also be found as far as the Verde Valley. Dead Horse

State Park is a good place to look in that part of the state.

In southern Arizona the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Sanctuary is sure to have multiple pairs of Vermilions, they can be found around any of the three ponds at Kino Springs north of Nogales, and any of the trails along the San Pedro and Santa Cruz Rivers should produce a sighting. They are also along Arivaca Creek westward to the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, and the Arivaca Cienega section of the refuge generally has multiple birds during winter.

It should be noted, before leaving this species, that female and immature Vermilions are not unmistakably red. The female, with its buff-to-rose belly and white breast under brown streaking, might be mistaken for an immature Say's Phoebe which may show some breast streaks.

Young Say's will never be as white on the breast as female and immature Vermilions, and any phoebe will have a longer-tailed appearance than any Vermilion.

Young Vermilions are

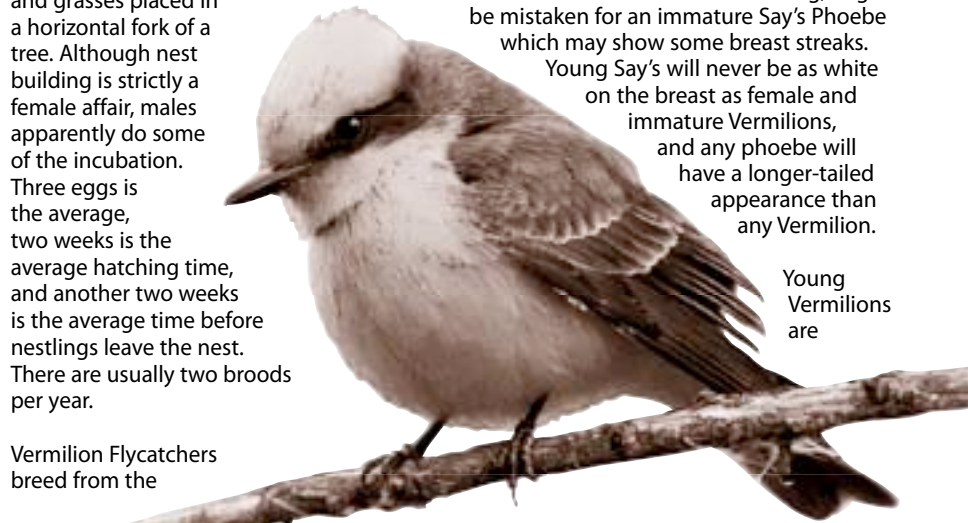


Photo by Jim Burns

sometimes passed off as empids or just passed over as unidentifiable head-scratchers. These may feed like empids, but they look like empids only superficially. Even juvenile Vermilions with no color will have this species' dark-masked look, and they will have distinct spotting on the breast which, as they age, will develop into definite streaking as the belly turns yellow-buff on the immature bird.

Sometimes it seems that special birds with special plumage, the ones we just can't stop looking at, are rather shy and hard to pin down and savor. Not so with the little firehead. This is a relatively tame bird, as many flycatchers are, and it usually seems much more focused on its prey than on inobtrusive observers. It often perches at eye level, often returns to the same perch or an even closer one, often obliges the patient birder by turning around to show off that fiery breast. If you catch it in the sunlight, I hope you're wearing sunglasses.

Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

photo quiz

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

It will be difficult, in black and white, to ace this quiz, but at least it will help make you aware of diagnostic issues regarding these three birds, and it's beginning to sound like sooner or later they will be three different species.



A. Good photo, difficult bird



B. Good photo, difficult bird



C. Good photo, difficult bird

All photos by Jim Burns

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

March through May, 2009

CAR POOLING: 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 10 cents per mile. Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

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

DIFFICULTY LEVELS 1 THROUGH 5:

1 equals very low level of exertion, short walking distance, considerable birding from vehicle and possible multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails. Trips are level 1 unless noted otherwise.

REMINDERS:

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

Day Passes Required for National Forests. Many favorite spots in our National Forests now require Day Use Passes. You are responsible to acquire a day pass (\$6) in advance of field trips with an asterisk (). Passes are available by phone or mail, at FS district and ranger offices, Big 5, some Circle K's, the Shell station at Tom Darlington and Cave Creek Road and elsewhere. Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/tp/where.shtml> for more information.

Impromptu Field Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others planned field trips on short notice. Also get reminders of MAS field trips by email. Founded by naturalist Mike Plagens, membership is easy, free and open to those who have an interest in the flora, fauna, and ecology of Arizona. Not just a trip listing, view the website for trip reports, flora and fauna databases, maps, links to google earth including Gilbert Water ranch, and photos. Trips focus on plants, animals, mycology, geology, biology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, paleontology, birding,

anthropology or microbiology. Share expenses, experiences and expertise with like-minded travelers. Proposed trips should include a brief description of the destination, ways, means, purpose, hiking difficulty, departure location, date and time. Drivers and riders will negotiate between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/

Wednesday, March 11

*Native Flowers and Plants of the East Valley: Join us for a walk in the desert by the lower Salt River to look for wildflowers and other native plants. With staggered winter rains we should find an interesting season for flora. We will touch on identification techniques and ecology. Bring binoculars as we will be watching for typical desert birds as well (and you can use them backwards as a loupe). Limit 15. Difficulty 1. Bring snacks and water. Lunch optional.

Leader: Mel Bramley, 480.969.9893 evenings for reservations and information.

Saturday, March 14th

Desert Survivors Native Plants and Catalina State Park: We start with a guided tour of Desert Survivors Nursery in Tucson with Chuck LeFevre and director, Jim Verrier. Desert Survivors is a treat for native plant gardeners and aficionados alike as they cultivate many unusual and hard to find native plants. We then travel northeast of Oro Valley to Catalina State Park at the base of the majestic Santa Catalina Mountains. Dedicated in 1983, this 3,000' upper Sonoran desert in the Coronado National Forest was narrowly saved from a golf course development of 17,000 people. We will hike to the Romero Pools for picnic lunch. Crissal Thrasher and Rufous-winged Sparrows are possible. Afterwards, campers can continue climbing to pine trees and into the Coronado National Forest while day hikers can return to trailhead by 4:00. Partially excavated Hohokam ruins are another interesting feature. Possible water crossings. The park can be chilly early in the morning. Bring layers, snack, lunch, water, camping gear (optional). Facilities, overnight camping, hot showers, shopping nearby. Difficulty 3 (uphill hiking on well maintained trail). Limit 12. Meet 8:00AM at Desert Survivors Nursery. I-10 south, exit Starr Pass Road, turn west (right), ¼ mile on right. Or meet 11:00AM

Catalina State Park entry station. Take Route 77 (Oracle Road) northeast of I-10. From Phoenix, use Tangerine exit (check updates on I-10 ramp closures). Entry fee \$6.00 per vehicle. Camping fees Non-Electric site: \$15, Electric site: \$20.

Leader: Chuck LeFevre. laurienessel@gmail.com or 480.968.5614 for reservations.

Wednesday, March 18

Agua Fria River Recharge Ponds: View migratory waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines. Meet 8AM. Take E. Camelback Rd. to 107th Ave. Turn north on 107th Ave. until it stops. Telescopes helpful. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Bob Witzeman 602 840-0052

Monday, March 23 – Saturday, April 4 (also June 1-13, Oct 12-24 & Dec 27-Jan 8)

Ecuador's Andes - The Northwest and Northeast Slopes: Fee \$1595 from Quito. Join Andean Adventures on this active, affordable and exciting 12 day tour to both the NW and NE slopes of the Andes, visiting 5 lodges and 6 reserves for an unforgettable birding adventure filled with mixed flocks of gaudy tanagers, hummingbirds, toucans, antpittas, manakins, barbets and ovenbirds amid superb montane scenery. The tour begins in the lush cloudforest reserves of Yunguilla, Santa Lucia and Maquipucuna on the NW slope which comprise the biodiverse and endemic-rich Choco Bio-region and are home to over 450 species including a spectacular Cock-of-the-Rock lek at Santa Lucia with 30+ birds, rare White-faced Nunbird, Toucan Barbet, Giant Antpitta, Beautiful Jay and dozens of brilliant hummers. Elevations range from 2,500 feet to 8,500 feet for a marvelous variety of birds in different habitats.

Returning to Quito, we bird the paramo at the Papallacta Pass over 14,000 feet for Andean Condor, Rufous-bellied Seedsnipe, Giant Conebill, Ecuadorian Hillstar, specialty ovenbirds and waterfowl found only on paramo lakes. Descending the NE slope into prime temperate forest, the legendary feeders at Guango Lodge host scores of dazzling hummers including the spectacular Sword-billed Hummingbird and Long-tailed Sylph. Lower downslope, San Isidro Lodge is home to the famous and intriguing Mystery Owl – an as of yet undetermined species, a birder's dream! Located at 6,800 feet, fabulous subtropical forest birding offers Highland Motmot, Rufous-crowned Tody-Flycatcher, White-capped Tanager and Emerald Toucanet, with

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

field trips

a myriad of glittering gems including Chestnut-breasted Coronet, Collared Inca and Fawn-breasted Brilliant crowding the feeders.

Amazon Extension – Rainforests and Rivers: 5 days, \$600 from Quito after Andes tour. A new realm of unsurpassed birding awaits! Sani Lodge on the Rio Napo boasts over 550 species and an impressive 100 foot high tower ideal for canopy birding with vibrant macaws, aracarís, cotingas, parrots, tanagers, raptors and even howler monkeys easy to see. Birding excursions to parrot clay licks, river islands, blackwater lagoons and both terra firme and varzea forests with expert native guides yield lowland specialties like the very rare Rufous Potoo, White-lored Antpitta, Ornate Hawk-Eagle, Amazonian Umbrellabird, Crested Owl and fascinating antswarms hosting flocks of complex antbirds.

Leaders: Sally Johnsen 520-399-4050 empidonax@netzero.net and Moez Ali 520-820-3499 moezali15@hotmail.com for reservations, complete itineraries, birdlists or additional information

Saturday, April 11

Rackensack Canyon Butterflies and Wildflowers: MAS joins Central Arizona Butterfly Association for a joint fieldtrip. Rackensack Canyon is a tributary of Camp Creek northeast of Carefree. Depending on spring rains, this transition zone between Upper Sonoran Desert and Chaparral Scrub could have surface flows. Last year we recorded 24 species of butterflies as well as a stunning display of wildflowers. Leader Janet Witzeman has been observing and learning about Arizona butterflies since



Common Buckeye at Rackensack Canyon

1982 when she began going on the Southeast Arizona Butterfly Association counts with Richard Bailowitz and Doug Danforth. Janet learned more about

Maricopa County butterflies from Killian Roever and has been leading butterfly field trips for MAS since 1994. Bring sack lunch, water, hat and close focus binoculars. Meet 7:30 A.M. at the southeast corner of Cavecreek Road and Bartlett Dam Road (about 8 miles East of Carefree). End around noon. \$5 donation benefits CABA education programs. No reservations.

Leader: Janet Witzeman

Saturday, April 18

Peachville Mountain: Peachville Mountain is a huge, dome-shaped mountain in the Superstitions (in the Superior CBC area), with approximately 18 square miles of contiguous grassland, rocky washes, and riparian areas in the wash between Peachville and King's Crown Mountains. It has been nearly inaccessible for almost a decade, but SRP work on nearby power lines has led to FS229 being re-graded. We will drive up FS229 to the base of the mountain, hike some of the grasslands and washes, and visit the riparian area on the way back. There should be vast numbers of sparrows (migrant Brewer's and others, and resident Rufous-crowned and Black-throated), a nice array of wrens and gnatcatchers, and birds of prey. The area has not been birded (except in last winter's CBC), so we should expect surprises.

Elevations range from 2,000 to 5,000 feet. Temperatures can range from quite cool in the morning to warm in the afternoon, so dress in layers. High-clearance vehicles are recommended, but 4WD is not necessary. Bring lunch, plenty of water, and a scope (optional). Meet 6:00AM Open Range

Steakhouse, 6030 S. King's Ranch Rd, Gold Canyon (1 mile northeast of US 60, on the north side of King's Ranch Rd). End around 6:00PM. Maximum 15. Difficulty 4 (appx. 5 miles hiking, some moderately strenuous)

Leader: Tom Gaskill 602-712-0635 gaskillt@mindspring.com for reservations.

Saturday, May 16

***Rogers Trough and Montana Mountain:** We will travel up FS172 northeast of Queen Valley to Rogers Trough, a beautiful riparian area in the Superstition Mountains. From there, we will continue on FS650 to the north face of Montana Mountain, a seldom-visited area at nearly 6,000 feet. Vegetation changes from saguaro desert

to cottonwood corridors to alligator and one-seed junipers as we gain elevation. The country is spectacular, and the bird life is rich and varied. Expect Spotted and Canyon Towhees, Scrub and Steller's Jays, Bushtits, Bluebirds, and a very wide variety of Flycatchers, Vireos and Warblers.

The hiking is fairly level, although some at almost 6,000 feet. Even in May, temperatures can be cool in the shaded areas of Montana Mountain, so bring a light jacket. The road is rough in spots with creek crossings. High-clearance vehicles are required (4WD is recommended). Bring lunch, plenty of water, and a scope (optional). End near 6:00PM. Maximum 15. Difficulty 3 (appx. 5 miles hiking, some higher-elevation). \$6/vehicle Tonto National Forest pass required. Meet 6:00AM Open Range Steakhouse, 6030 S. King's Ranch Rd, Gold Canyon (1 mile northeast of US 60, on the north side of King's Ranch Rd).

Leader: Tom Gaskill 602-712-0635 gaskillt@mindspring.com for reservations.

Continuing

Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens. Mondays; Oct-May 8:00A. Second Saturdays Oct-May 8:00A. Join expert birders for a morning bird walk along the Garden trails. Everyone, including first-time birders, is welcome. Wear a hat, sunscreen, and comfortable walking shoes, and bring binoculars if available. Free with admission to the garden.

Bird Walks at Sonoita Creek State Natural Area located within Patagonia Lake State Park. Mondays, Thursdays and Saturdays, October- April 15th. 5 mile bird hikes along both upland and riparian habitats. Patagonia Lake Road, 7 miles west of Patagonia. \$7 entry fee per vehicle. <http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sonoitacreeksna.html> for current schedule. For information/reservations (required) call (520) 287-2791

Bird, Butterfly or Dragonfly Walks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Join knowledgeable guides for walks through the Arboretum, located at Highway 60 milepost #223 near the historic copper mining town of Superior, 55 miles east of Phoenix. \$7.50 admission. Check their website for current schedule. <http://cals.arizona.edu/BTA/index.html>.

Conservation

Bob Witzeman

The love of Nature is the only love that does not deceive human hopes
– Balzac (1799-1850)

January 2009 heralded a courtroom victory for protecting Arizona's vanishing Sonoran Desert streams and wetlands from destruction by mining companies, and from keeping toxic mine pollution



Devil's Canyon: Under siege by the proposed Resolution Copper mine land swap, is a riparian masterpiece of springs, wetlands, limpid pools and breathtaking waterfalls. Some 80-90% of Arizona's riparian wetlands, critical to the survival of Sonoran Desert birds and wildlife, have been destroyed by dams, stream diversions, mining, groundwater pumping, and grazing. Winter photo: Lisa Fitzner. To see these photos (and Jim Burns' awesome photos) in full color wait several days after you receive this newsletter for them to be posted at: maricopaaudubon.org

out of the drinking water supplies of Phoenix. The joyous news was that the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear a 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case which upheld a lawsuit brought by environmental groups (including the Maricopa Audubon Society).

The Carlota Mine, found culpable by the federal courts, besides polluting Pinto Creek, would dry up the Haunted

Canyon riparian gem. Noteworthy birds seen there include the Eared Quetzal (not to be confused with Elegant Trogon). Birdwatchers from afar came to view that rare and exquisitely beautiful Mexican species. It is found in similar canyon habitats in northern Mexico. Carlota is now dewatering and destroying that canyon's riparian vegetation.

The mine also dewater and pollutes Pinto Creek and its unique and threatened Sonoran Desert riparian species including the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo.

Carlota is only a few miles east of the proposed ecologically destructive, Resolution Copper Company (RCC) mine. RCC's proposed congressional land swap would privatize and obliterate much of some 3000 acres of USFS land. It would destroy miles of one of Arizona's Sonoran Desert riparian jewels, namely, Devil's Canyon.

RCC's land swap would remove National Environmental Policy Act protections, and vitiate Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act protections to a treasure-trove of endangered species, riparian habitats, and Native American historic, sacred and cultural sites.

Witness the extraordinary diversity of broad-leaved tree species listed in the attached Devil's Canyon photo captions. Tragically, the RCC's proposed swap lands consist of mostly overgrazed, abused USFS/BLM inholdings. RCC's swap proffers a mesquite forest monoculture adjacent to a dried up, non-flowing, sand-and-desert reach of the San Pedro River. The water table there is too deep for surface stream flow or for broad-leaved deciduous trees, the signature vegetation which makes the San Pedro unique for its birdlife and ecologic diversity.



The NEPA-exempt proposed Resolution Copper Co. land swap would dewater Devil's Canyon's many-mile riparian treasure of Fremont Cottonwood, Goodding Willow, Arizona Black Walnut, Arizona Ash, Arizona White Oak, Emory Oak, Arizona Alder, Arizona Sycamore, Coyote Willow, and Arizona Cypress. It is studded with Black and Zone-tailed Hawk nests. That legislation would vitiate Endangered Species Act and National Historic Preservation Act laws protecting endangered species and Native American historic and cultural sites. Fall photo: Charles Babbitt.

SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, & NOVEMBER
2008

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA). Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), Lower River Road Ponds (LRRP), many observers (m.ob.), Morgan City Wash (MCW), Painted Rock Dam (PRD), Tempe Town Lake (TTL), Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP).

Unlike a year ago when large numbers of White-fronted Geese were reported, only one was observed this fall: a juvenile, in a flooded field in Scottsdale 25 Nov (MMo). Two Snow Geese were seen at LRRP in Palo Verde 22 Nov (MHe), four were seen in a flooded field in Scottsdale 25 Nov (MMo), and four more (or the same) were reported at McCormick Ranch 30 Nov (MMo). A Ross's Goose was seen at the WTP in Casa Grande 31 Oct (JWd) and an immature was observed at McCormick Ranch 30 Nov (MMo).

An immature Wood Duck was seen in Arlington Valley 27 Sep (KR) and a pair were reported at the Gila Bend WTP from 1 to 22 Nov (CBab,SSt). Two "Mexican" Mallards were observed at Rousseau Sod Farm near Scottsdale 8 Nov (TC,DY). A Blue-winged Teal (rare after mid-Nov) was reported at GWR 20 Nov and then a pair was observed there 22 Nov (MMo). A female Greater Scaup was found at Butcher Jones Beach, Saguaro Lake 9 Nov at least until 30 Nov (MMo et al.). Ten female Com. Goldeneyes were reported at the Gila Bend WTP 23 Nov (RHa).

A Chukar (most likely an escapee) was discovered in South Mountain Park, Phoenix 8 Sep (RDu). Two Wild Turkeys, photographed at BTA 4 - 14 Nov (fide PW) were new to that area.

An unhealthy Com. Loon was picked up in Deer Valley 27 Oct and taken to Liberty Wildlife where it expired (AP). Several family groups of Western Grebes, some with $\frac{3}{4}$ grown chicks still being fed, were observed at Roosevelt Lake on the late date of 8 Nov (TC,MHe); downy young were still being seen with adults at Roosevelt Lake on the late date of 25 Nov (MHe). A few were also reported on ponds where they are less common than on lakes: one at LRRP 12 - 19 Oct (MHe) and two there 1 Nov (CBab), one at Gila Bend WTP 1 Nov (CBab), one at TTL 8 Nov (MWeb), and one on a gravel pit pond in Buckeye 23 Nov (TC). A Clark's Grebe was found in a gravel pit pond in Chandler 30 Nov (MHe,PD).

A juvenile Am. White Pelican, observed at GWR 18 Sep, was the first for that area (RDi), one was found in Arlington Valley 27 Sep (KR), and four were seen at PRD 1 Nov (CBab,SSt). Two Brown Pelicans were observed on Roosevelt Lake 27 Sep (LL). More unusual were individual Brown Pelicans reported in November: an adult

flying over I-8 in w. Maricopa Co. 3 Nov (RHo), an adult in the Tonto Creek Arm of Roosevelt Lake 8 Nov (TC,MHe), a juvenile at Kiwanis Park in Tempe 13 - 17 Nov (R&AT), a juvenile at Papago Park Ponds 14 Nov (RT), a juvenile at Ocotillo in Chandler 20 Nov (SDo, fide MSc), a juvenile at Gillespie Dam 23 Nov (RHa), and an adult at a gravel pit pond in Chandler on the late dates of 29 - 30 Nov (MHe,PD).

Although 100 Neotropic Cormorants were counted at the LRRP 12 Oct (MHe), fewer than usual numbers were reported elsewhere. Four were observed at GWR 18 Sep (MMo), only two were seen at GWR 6 Nov (MMo), a few were observed at TTL 30 Nov (MWeb), and a few were seen at the Gilbert and Ocotillo ponds 30 Nov (MMo).

A very early Am. Bittern, discovered at GWR 2-22 Aug (MMo), provided the second August record for Maricopa County (not the first August record as reported in the previous Field Observations column). Another Am. Bittern was found at a gravel pit pond s. of Buckeye 23 Nov (TC). A Least Bittern, discovered at BTA 25 Aug (CTo) represented the first record for that area. A large number of 200 Cattle Egrets were counted near 99th Ave. and Broadway 6 Sep (MHe), ten were seen at LRRP 15 Nov (MHe), two were observed at GWR 18 Nov (MMo), 20 were counted in Arlington Valley 20 Nov (RWd,LHAt), 30 were reported in Chandler 29 Nov (MHe), and 45 were counted in Arlington Valley 29 Nov (TC,BIs).

A Glossy Ibis was discovered at the Baseline & Palo Verde Rd. sludge ponds 23 Aug (KR,DPO) and provided the fourth record for Maricopa County and Arizona. A hybrid White-faced/Glossy Ibis was found in the same area 24 Aug (MMo). A Roseate Spoonbill was discovered at GWR 27 Sep and remained at least until 11 Nov (LN,BGri,PMo,MMo et al.). A second Roseate Spoonbill was found at Granite Reef Picnic Area 28 Sep (SG). There have been nine previous records for Maricopa Co.

Two White-tailed Kites were observed in Arlington Valley 19 Oct and one was seen there 9 Nov (MHe); another individual was reported at Casa Grande, Pinal Co. 10 Nov (RFra). Unusual was a N. Harrier observed at BTA 15 Nov (KA). One of the pair of Gray Hawks, that summered and attempted nesting at HRP, was last seen there 14 Sep (MHe). A Zone-tailed Hawk, observed at MCW 7 - 13 Sep, was a new species for that area (TC). A Crested Caracara was seen at Casa Grande 13 Nov (MWeb). A high number of Peregrine Falcons was found wintering in Scottsdale 25 Nov: three at the Rousseau Sod Farm and two more at other Scottsdale locations (MMo).

Individual Virginia Rails were reported at Granite Reef 12 Oct (HF et al.) and at the marsh on Sisson Rd. 1 Nov (CBab,SSt).

Numbers of Sandhill Cranes in Arlington Valley increased from 12 observed there 12 Oct (MHe) to more than 300 counted there 29 Nov (TC,BI), a record high number for Maricopa County. One Sandhill Crane was seen at GWR 25 Oct (CM), four were counted at Paloma 1 Nov (CBab,SSt), one was seen flying over Estrella Mt. Park 23 Nov (BMc), and five were observed 23 Nov, flying from 115th Ave. east into Phoenix where the species is rarely found (TC).

An Am. Avocet (rare after late October) was observed at GWR 22 - 23 Nov (MMo,RWz). The N. Jacana, that had been frequenting the golf course in Casa Grande from at least November 2007 until mid-April 2008, was missed and went unreported after that until 5 Nov when it was re-found and was still present at the end of the period (fide MSt,m.ob.). A Solitary Sandpiper was observed at Hunter's sludge ponds 13 Sep (MHe). Individual Willets were reported at Palo Verde 27 Sep (KR) and at the Gila Bend shrimp ponds 10 Oct (RWz); two were seen at the Citrus Valley Rd. pond 10 Aug (DPO,KR). Again, as last winter, a high number of 140 Greater Yellowlegs was counted in Arlington Valley 29 Nov (TC,BIs), unusual for this late in the season. Three Lesser Yellowlegs (casual to rare late fall and winter visitors) were observed in Arlington Valley 29 Nov (TC,BIs).

A high number of more than 220 Long-billed Curlews were counted at the Paloma Ranch dairy pond 6 Oct (RWz,DTd) and 1 Nov (CBab,SSt); five more were seen in Arlington Valley 29 Nov (TC). A Marbled Godwit was observed again at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 10 Sep (KR). One of the two juvenile Semipalmated Sandpipers, found at the Palo Verde sludge ponds in August, remained until 22 Sep (KR). Only one Dunlin was reported during the period: at the Gila Bend WTP 18 Oct (KR,DPO). Between three and five juvenile Stilt Sandpipers were observed at GWR 18 - 19 Oct (MMo,HBon), an adult was seen at the Palo Verde sludge ponds 10 Sep (KR), a high number of 20 were counted at Palo Verde 27 Sep (KR), and one was observed at PRD 18 Oct (RWz,KA). One Stilt Sandpiper was found at GWR on the late date of 20 Nov (MMo) and provided the first November record for Maricopa County. Two juvenile Short-billed Dowitchers were seen at ponds in Arlington Valley 27 Sep (KR).

Three adult Bonaparte's Gulls were found on Roosevelt Lake 8 Nov (TC,MHe), ten were counted on the LRRP 9 Nov (MHe), and a first winter Bonaparte's was observed at the Gila Bend WTP 11 Nov (PD). Three California Gulls were reported at the LRRP 15 Nov (MHe). A Sabine's Gull was discovered at Granite Reef Picnic Area 28 Sep (SG). Three Black Terns

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Field Observations

Continued from page 11

were seen at the Gila Bend Watermelon Rd. pond 3 Sep (RHa).

Unusual was a Band-tailed Pigeon observed in a lowland location at Agua Caliente in far western Maricopa Co. 14 – 15 Oct (PL). A late-staying White-winged Dove was seen at Granite Reef Picnic Area 12 Oct (HF et al.). Unusual was the pair of Com. Ground-Doves seen at Rio Verde Ranch 15 Nov (TC) and the eight observed near TTL 23 Nov (MWeb); the species is considered to be uncommon after the end of September. Two female Ruddy Ground-Doves were discovered at GWR 14 Nov (PD,BGri), one frequented a Mesa yard 5 – 10 Nov (JMi), two were found at Kiwanis Park 21 Nov (BMz), and an adult or subadult male was photographed on the south slope of North Mountain in Sunnyslope 24 Nov (PH).

A Long-eared Owl (a rare winter visitor) was discovered at the Desert Botanical Garden 16 Nov (JBar). A male Broad-billed Hummingbird (a rare visitor) was found coming to a feeder in a Glendale yard 19 – 23 Nov (JMX). An adult male Broad-tailed Hummingbird (a rare fall transient in the lowlands) was observed in a yard in Gilbert 13 – 20 Aug (CW).

A Williamson's Sapsucker (a rare winter visitor) was discovered at the top of Picket Post Mt., BTA 28 Nov (ErH). A juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (a casual visitor in the fall) was observed at Paloma 1 Nov (CBab,SSt). An early N. "Red-shafted" Flicker was seen at MCW 7 Sep (TC); the species is not usually found in the lowlands until mid to late September.

Three Willow Flycatchers (uncommon transients) were seen again at MCW 7 Sep (TC). Several family groups of Brown-crested Flycatchers were still being seen at MCW 16 Aug, two were heard calling there 7 Sep, and an adult and juvenile observed there 13 Sep indicated a late nesting (TC); the species is rarely reported after mid to late August. Another Brown-crested Flycatcher was found at BTA on the late date of 14 Sep (TC). Individual Cassin's and Western Kingbirds were observed in Arlington Valley on the late date of 18 Oct (KR,DPO).

An adult White-eyed Vireo was photographed at MCW 13 Sep (TC) and provided the fourth record for Maricopa County; there have been fewer than 20 previous records for the state. Four Bell's Vireos, including an adult feeding a fledgling, were seen at MCW on the late date of 27 Sep (TC), providing a late nesting record. Previously Bell's Vireos were rarely seen after mid-September, but in recent years the species has lingered until the end of September (TC). A Bell's Vireo, reported in Chandler 18 Nov (MPi) may be wintering there. The Bell's Vireo, seen at GWR 20 Nov (MMo) & 29 Nov (LHar,DVP), was found to be wintering there for the third consecutive year. Individual late-staying Cassin's Vireos were observed at GWR 6 & 29

Nov (MMo), at Rio Verde Ranch 15 Nov (TC), and at 107th Ave. and the Salt River 23 Nov (TC). A Red-eyed Vireo was discovered at Spur Cross Conservation Area in Cave Creek 14 Sep (BlS et al.).

A late Barn Swallow was seen at the Casa Grande WWTP 11 Nov (TC,DY). An adult Red-breasted Nuthatch (an uncommon migrant) was observed at MCW on the early date of 7 Sep, providing one of the earliest fall lowland records in Arizona (TC); the species is not usually found until the third week in September. Two Red-breasted Nuthatches, seen at MCW 12 Oct, were unusual as there were no others reported in the lowlands this fall (TC). Individual Brown Creepers were reported at Eldorado Park 3 Nov (JBar) and at BTA 9 Nov (TC).

Individual Winter Wrens (rare fall and winter visitors) were found at BTA 11 & 14 Nov (CBab,SSt,JBu) and in a Mesa yard 24 – 30 Nov (JMi). A Varied Thrush (a casual winter visitor) was discovered at BTA 11 Nov (CBab,SSt). A Brown Thrasher (a casual fall and winter visitor) was photographed in a Scottsdale yard 8 Oct (LaV&RS, fide JDg). A Sprague's Pipit (a rare winter visitor) was discovered at the Higley Ponds in Gilbert 25 Nov (MMo). A Cedar Waxwing, observed at MCW 7 Sep, was slightly earlier than usual (TC).

Many Lucy's Warblers were still being seen at GWR on 18 Sep (MMo), a date that formerly was considered to be late, but in recent years the species has been staying later, some even into October and November. A first fall female N. Parula (a rare migrant and winter visitor) was photographed at the Box Bar Ranch on the Verde River 15 Nov (TC). A first year Chestnut-sided Warbler (a rare winter visitor) was found at BTA 9 Nov (R&JJ) and was still present at the end of the period. Another Chestnut-sided Warbler was reported in a Mesa yard 14 Nov (JMi). A Yellow-throated Warbler was discovered in Arizona City, Pinal Co. 8 - 16 Nov (KR et al.); there are fewer than 20 previous state records. An adult fall male Blackpoll Warbler was discovered at GWR 11 Nov (MMo); there were ten previous records for Maricopa County.

Individual Black-and-white Warblers were reported behind Tempe Market Place 21 Sep (MWeb), at Eldorado Park 26 Sep (JBar), and at BTA 11 & 12 Oct (JBar et al.). Individual female Am. Redstarts were observed at Jewel of the Creek Preserve in Cave Creek 12 Oct (MRi), and at GWR 11 - 29 Nov (MMo et al.). An immature male Am. Redstart was also seen at GWR 14 – 15 Nov (MMo). A Prothonotary Warbler, photographed at GWR 21 Sep (RCa), provided the eighth record for Maricopa County. A Worm-eating Warbler was found at HRP 9 Nov (L&KB); there were ten previous records for Maricopa County. A N. Waterthrush was observed at GWR 19 Sep (HBon). A Kentucky Warbler was discovered at GWR 5

Oct (L&KB); there were eight previous records for Maricopa County. A late-staying Wilson's Warbler was seen at GWR 11 – 28 Nov (MMo,SG,RJ).

Two Swamp Sparrows (uncommon winter visitors) were observed at Granite Reef Dam 22 Nov (JMi) and one was seen in Arlington Valley 23 Nov (RHa). A tan-striped adult White-throated Sparrow was found at Devil's Canyon near Superior 28 Nov (ErH). A first year Chestnut-sided Longspur was seen at Rousseau Sod Farm near Scottsdale 8 Nov (TC,MHe).

A Pyrrhuloxia (rare in urban areas) was photographed in a Paradise Valley yard 11 – 17 Nov (DRo). Four different male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were observed in a Mesa yard 10 – 11 Aug, 4 Sep, 13 Sep, and 26 – 27 Sep (JMi). Individual Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were also found at Jewel of the Creek Preserve in Cave Creek 14 Sep (BlS et al.) and at BTA 11 Nov (CBab,SSt). An Indigo Buntings (a rare transient) was observed at BTA 14 Sep (TC,MHe). Another Varied Bunting (in addition to the ones reported in July), a female, was found at BTA 27 Sep (CTo). Four Dickcissels (casual fall transients) were discovered at BTA 17 Sep (DSt).

A White-collared Seedeater was discovered and photographed at GWR 3 – 7 Oct (RDi et al.), a species that is not on the Arizona checklist of birds. "Unless we begin accumulating additional Sonoran and Arizona records of the W. Mexico race of seedeaters, they should be considered as likely escapees." (TC).

Observers: Kathe Anderson (KA), Charles Babbitt (CBab), Jack Bartley (JBar), Linda & Ken Bielek (L&KB), Harold Bond (HBon), Jim Burns (JBu), Richard Calero (RCa), Troy Corman (TC), Pierre Deviche (PD), Joy Dingley (JDg), Rich Ditch (RDi), Stuart Doughty (SDo), Robert Dummer (RDu), Herb Fibel (HF), Richard Fray (RFra), Reed Freeman (RFre), Steve Ganley (SG), Brendon Grice (BGri), Ron Haaseth (RHa), Lauren Harter (LHar), Liz Hatcher (LHat), Melanie Herring (MHe), Paul Hershberger (PH), Eric Hough (ErH), Rich Hoyer (RHo), Brian Ison (BlS), Roy & Jill Jones (R&JJ), Larry Langstaff (LL), Paul Lehman (PL), Cindy Marple (CM), Jeff Maxcy (JMX), Bob Mc Cormick (BMc), Bobbie Metz (BMz), Jay Miller (JMi), Mike Moore (MMo), Pete Moulton (PMo), Laurie Nessel (LN), Mike Petrie (MPi), Anne Peyton (AP), Dave Powell (DPo), Kurt Radamaker (KR), Michael Rigney (MRi), David Rosenberg (DRo), Myron Scott (MSc), Sig Stangeland (SSt), Dave Stejskal (DSt), La Vanne & Rachel Stephenson (LaV&RS), Mark Stevenson (MSt), Ron & Ann Thomas (R&AT), Dick Todd (DTd), Carl Tomoff (CTo), David Vander Pluym (DVP), Magill Weber (MWeb), Cindy West (CW), Russ Widner (RWd), Jason Wilder (JWd), Robert Witzeman (RWz), Paul Wolterbeck (PW), Daniela Yellan (DY).

ProjectFeederWatchBenefitsBirds&People

More than 100 studies have shown that getting closer to nature reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well-being in children and adults. So, filling feeders and counting the birds that visit may be just what the doctor ordered! For more than 20 years, that's what participants in the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's Project FeederWatch have been doing—benefitting themselves and the birds.

"It is a great winter time activity for the whole family," says Alaska FeederWatcher Nancy Darnell. "If you have children, they will come to love watching the birds. All of this is fun and a chance to contribute to scientific studies, too!"

The 2008-09 season of Project FeederWatch gets underway November 8 and runs through April 3. Participants count the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders each week and send the information to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. Participants submitted more than 115,000 checklists during the 2007-08 FeederWatch season, documenting unusual bird sightings, winter movements, and shifting ranges—a treasure-trove of information that scientists use to monitor the health of the birds and of the environment.

"Being a FeederWatcher is easy and fun, and at the same time helps generate the world's largest database on feeder-bird populations," says project leader David Bonter. "We are grateful for the contributions our participants have made for the birds and are proud of the joy they say it brings to their busy lives. Since we started in 1987, more than 40,000 people have submitted observations, engaging with the wildlife beyond their windows."

"Project FeederWatch opened up a whole new world for me," says participant Cheri Ryan of Lockport, Kentucky. "It's so interesting to watch the activities of the birds. I learn something new each time I participate."

Scientists learn something new from the data each year, too, whether it's about the movements of common backyard birds or unusual sightings of rarely-seen species. Highlights of the most recent season include

the largest southward movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches in the history of the project—part of an expected influx of northern birds that fly farther south when their food supplies run short. Other northern species showing up in record numbers included Common Repolls and Pine Siskins. Among the rare birds reported was a Streak-backed Oriole in Loveland, Colorado—the state's first report of this bird, native to Mexico. A December nor'easter deposited a Dovekie in Newton, Massachusetts, the first time this North Atlantic seabird has ever been reported to Project FeederWatch.

Long-term data show some species increasing in number, such as the Lesser Goldfinch in the Southwest. Other populations continue a downward trend, such as the Evening Grosbeak throughout their range. Once one of the most common species seen at feeders in the northern half of the continent, the grosbeaks are declining for unknown reasons.

Beyond the benefits to birds and science, however, is the benefit to participants. "Nature is not merely an amenity; it is critical to healthy human development and functioning," says Nancy Wells, Cornell University assistant professor of design and environmental analysis. Her studies find that a view of nature through the window or access to the environment in any way improves a child's cognitive functioning and reduces the negative effects of stress on the child's psychological well-being. Wells also notes that when children spent time with nature early in life it carries over to their adult attitudes and behavior toward the environment.

Project FeederWatch welcomes participants of all ages and skill levels, from scout troops and retirees to classrooms and nature center visitors. To learn more and to sign up, visit www.feederwatch.org or call the Lab toll-free at (800) 843-2473. In return for the \$15 fee (\$12 for Lab members) participants receive the FeederWatcher's Handbook, an identification poster of the most common feeder birds in their area, a calendar, complete instructions, and the FeederWatch annual report, Winter Bird Highlights.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology has just released its newly revised, FREE Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch.

For more than 20 years, Project FeederWatch has been an easy, fun way for children to learn about birds and strengthen their skills in observation, identification, research, computation, writing, creativity, and more. FeederWatchers keep track of the numbers and kinds of birds at their feeders through the winter and report what they see to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

The Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch will guide you through bird-related activities that promote learning across many disciplines, including science, math, history, and the arts. Examples of these activities include:

- Natural history: Observe and research a bird's behavior and life cycle
- Math: Calculate average seed consumption rate and graph data
- Writing: Keep a nature journal to write stories and poetry
- Geography: Research the geographic ranges of birds
- Art: Keep a feeder-bird sketch book or create a papier mache mask

To download the Homeschooler's Guide to Project FeederWatch, visit www.feederwatch.org and click on the "Education/Home School" button. You'll be able to download the PDF in low (2.2MB) or high (6.7MB) resolutions.

You may choose to use the free guide as a stand-alone resource, or sign up for Project FeederWatch to submit the data you gather. If you would like to be a project participant, the signup fee is \$12 for members of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, \$15 for non-members. There are discounts for group participation.

If you have any questions, please let us know how we can help by emailing feederwatch@cornell.edu

Kathryn F. Anderson MAS Granite Reef Asterisk's 2008 Big Sit! Is In The Books

Herb Fibel

Even though the Kathryn F. Anderson MAS Granite Reef Asterisk's Big Sit!, hereinafter referred to as the KFAMASGRABS, has become a major annual fundraising event, raising this year about \$2,000 for MAS, our founder and guru, Connecticut's John Himmelman, would weep piteously if we ever started taking this annual (now international) tongue-in-cheek event too seriously.

We expanded the name of our 13th and future Big Sits to memorialize Kathe Anderson's

mother, who died within the past year, and Kathe became one of our sitters. She was joined by regulars Pete Moulton and Cynthia Donald, somewhat irregulars, soon to become regulars, Tom and Rosalinda Partel, Phyllis Martin and Cynthia Grant, and last and not least, me, who tallied from our virtually supine and utterly relaxed positions within the circle the amazing (at least for us) one day bird species list, as seen from the 16 foot diameter circle, of 70 species. It brought our total species count for the 13 years to 128. This year we added to our species list—snowy egret,

Virginia rail, Wilson's snipe, and white-winged dove. Our previous high was 67, but normally we see and hear only about 53 species.

Thanks to all who participated in the 13th annual KFAMASGRABS, and to all of you who made pledges and donations. If you have yet to send me your check, please let this be a gentle reminder to do so.

What a wonderful, relaxing, birding experience this always is.

Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

Despite what you see and what you may be thinking, these are photos of three different birds representing two different species. If that math doesn't compute, three into two, remember that the American Ornithological Union (AOU) is always busy reviewing what constitutes separable species and how congeners, birds in the same genus, are related to one another. This is particularly true now at a time when DNA studies have advanced the art/science of taxonomy and are showing that many presumed subspecies are, in fact, separate and distinct species. In short, the splitters are currently in ascendancy over the lumpers.

Even without color the three birds in our quiz are imminently recognizable with their thin, straight, pointed bills, black bibs, and distinctively patterned faces and underparts. If you knew these are meadowlarks, you've got the big picture. Meadowlarks are members of the Icterid family, sometimes referred to as the "Blackbird" family, and because they build their domed, grass nests on the ground, they are cryptically colored, at least on their upperparts. You probably know there are two separate species of meadowlarks in the country, but do you know how to tell them apart and did you know DNA research indicates a subspecies of one is probably a separate, species worthy population?

A) Good photo, difficult bird

I'm labeling all our photos "difficult" because we'd probably need the color versions to correctly identify all three birds. Our first meadowlark is the largest in the frame of the three, nicely posing in classic meadowlark fashion, and despite the lack of color it exhibits at least two of the four distinguishing plumage features characteristic of its species. Of the other two plumage features, one is indiscernible in all our photos, and the other is going to be partially an exercise of your imagination due to lack of color.

On our first bird we can see a dark postocular (behind the eye) stripe, but compared to that of the other two meadowlarks this eyeline is relatively thin and indistinct, and the matching dark crown stripe also seems somewhat lighter and less distinct than that of the other two birds. Additionally there is an area on the lower flank of this bird that appears white, or at least obviously lighter than the bird's belly. A comparison of this area with our other two birds indicates greater contrast here on our first bird.

A low contrast head pattern and white flanks are diagnostic marks of Western Meadowlark. This Western Meadowlark was photographed in December, 1999 in the San Rafael Valley of Southeastern Arizona. A third field mark separating Eastern and Western meadowlarks is the amount of white in the tail, difficult enough to see and compare in the field to be only corroboratively useful, and none of these photographs capture the spread tail. Westerns have the least amount of white there, typically only the two outermost feathers.

The fourth field mark distinguishing the meadowlarks shows quite well in the color versions of these three photos but, unfortunately, not in these black and white renditions. On Western Meadowlarks the bright yellow throat extends upward to the bottom of the cheek to give this species a yellow malar (the mustache line extending downward from the base of the lower mandible). On this first image, because of shading on the throat, the bird's malar actually appears brighter than its throat, but in the original color slide it is yellow too.

If these four plumage differences seem difficult and confusing, remember that the very best way to distinguish Western and Eastern Meadowlarks is voice. Western has a simple "Chuck" call and a beautiful, gurgling, seven syllable song with multiple variations. The Eastern Meadowlark's call is an unmistakable, buzzy "Dzert," and its song is a simple, four syllable "See you, see year" ascending at the end and repeated without much variation.

B) Good photo, difficult bird

Well, perhaps not so difficult now that we've reviewed Western Meadowlark field marks. On our second image we see a much bolder, more contrasting head pattern and no apparent difference in the intensity of the color between the bird's belly and its flanks. On this flight shot we cannot, of course, see the spread tail to judge the amount of white in the rectrices, and we cannot see the bird's throat to judge whether it contrasts with the malar, but the head pattern and the uniform belly and flank color tell us this is an Eastern Meadowlark. It was photographed in Osceola County, Florida in December, 2008.

Eastern Meadowlarks have slightly more white in the tail than Westerns, the white typically extending almost completely through the first three outermost rectrices. The malar on Easterns is white, not throat-matching yellow, and often forms a stirrup around the auriculars

(the cheek patch under and behind the eye below the eyeline). On this flight shot we can see the rear part of this stirrup extending from the black bib upward to the eyeline. Eastern Meadowlarks show a rufous background color on the upperparts reflected in buffy rather than white flanks, so Eastern is a more richly colored, less contrasty looking bird than its western congener.

C) Good photo, difficult bird

So, now we come to our third bird, the "punchline" of the quiz. If there are only two meadowlark species, why do we need three photos and, more to the point, how does this third meadowlark differ from the first two. Although it is more readily apparent in the color images, this third bird combines some field marks of both Eastern and Western. What we can see here in black and white are the bold head pattern, the white malar, and the non-contrasting flanks of the Eastern. Unfortunately we cannot see the spread tail or discern background color, but this bird's tail appears to be showing more white than that of the other two.

Please welcome Lilian's Meadowlark, the southwestern version of Eastern Meadowlark which a recent research paper and long-standing rumors suggest may soon be declared a separate species by the AOU. Lilian's breeds in southeast Arizona, southwest New Mexico, and west Texas in a population barely disjunct from Eastern Meadowlark, sings "See you, see year," and says "Dzert" just like Easterns. It's dorsal background color, however, is pale grayish-brown like that of Westerns and thus it is a brighter, more contrasty looking bird than its eastern counterpart. It has more extensive white in the tail, showing four or more white outermost rectrices. This Lilian's Meadowlark was photographed in Sierra Vista in January, 1999.

In Arizona Eastern (Lilian's) and Western Meadowlarks overlap, particularly in winter, but do not interbreed. Westerns prefer wetter habitats with shorter vegetation. Look for them in agricultural settings. Easterns (Lilian's) prefer more xeric habitats with taller, more open grasslands at perhaps slightly higher elevations. If you see a meadowlark you can't visually decipher, be patient and wait for it to vocalize, probably the only sure way to distinguish between the two, soon-to-be-three, species.

If you're still confused, here's a handy chart:

	EASTERN	LILIAN'S	WESTERN
Head Pattern	bold	bold	low contrast
Malar	white	white	yellow
Flanks	buffy	buffy	white
Dorsal Background	rufous	gray-brown	gray-brown
White in Tail Feathers	3 feathers	4 feathers	2 feathers
Song	"See you, see year"	"See you, see year"	long & gurgling
Call	buzzy "Dzert"	buzzy "Dzert"	simple "Chuck"

A Review Of Olivia Gentile's New Book, Life List

Jim Burns

Just before the holidays Deva received two new biographies of well known birders from authors asking that she read and review them for the Cactus Wren edition. The holidays being what they are, she asked if I'd like to share this duty. I picked the short straw, and she chose the one about Roger Tory Peterson. This left me to deal with the life story of Phoebe Snetsinger, perhaps not so well known, after all, unless you're a serious lister.

Phoebe Snetsinger was the shy, intelligent daughter of Leo Burnett, the founder of the Chicago company which grew into one of the country's largest and most successful advertising agencies. During the 1950s she found herself a repressed, stay-at-home housewife with four kids and an overwhelming feeling that this couldn't be all there was to life. Then her life changed dramatically and forever.

At age 34 a friend introduced Snetsinger to birding, the "hook" being a male Blackburnian Warbler. In her words, "It was like a window had opened up." Male Blackburnians have been known to do that to people. She began learning the birds of her neighborhood, then the ones she saw on family trips outside the city and throughout the country. Then, in 1981, her life changed dramatically and forever yet again.

Just short of her fiftieth birthday, she was diagnosed with melanoma and given a year to live. With her children raised, access to discretionary income from an inheritance, and not much time, she decided to go for it. At first the quest was to see as many of the world's birds as possible, but she soon realized that birding lifted her spirits and was at least partly responsible for sending her cancer into remission. At this point the game changed and she set out, quite consciously, to become the number one lister in the world.

Through 17 years of marital strain, 100 foreign countries, two recurrences of her melanoma, and

several serious misadventures including a gang rape, she succeeded in this goal. . . only to die in Madagascar in 1999 at age 78 when a tour van in which she was riding overturned. She was the only fatality. Go figure!

Olivia Gentile, the author, began this writing project after dating an avid birdwatcher, experiencing the wonder of birds herself, and then wondering what makes hard core birders tick. She was helped along immensely in this task because Snetsinger had begun her own memoir at age 65, a chronicle of her birding experiences which ultimately was published by the American Birding Association (ABA) in 2003 under the title *Birding On Borrowed Time*.

The first thing I have to say about *Life List* is that it is thoroughly researched and well written. That said, I'm not at all sure it is a book birders will like. It may well be more fully appreciated by non-birders who wonder what all the fuss is about—running around the country, or in this case the world, looking for birds, keeping a list, and making this strange obsession competitive.

Make no mistake, this book is about obsession, a character trait with which many birders who don't share it are all too aware, and obsession over anything is typically not a splendid thing. Although Gentile is non-judgmental and presents both the good and the bad sides of Snetsinger's compulsive later years, it speaks volumes that I cannot bring myself to call her subject by her first name, "Phoebe."

First name basis, for this reviewer, is reserved for those for whom I feel empathy. Though Gentile, from her many interviews, is able to offer readers several testimonials to Snetsinger's kindness and helpfulness to birding friends and fellow travelers, I feel empathy only for Snetsinger's family, particularly her long-suffering husband, and the tour guides and birders along the way who suffered her verbal and psychological abuse when things went wrong or she

missed her targets.

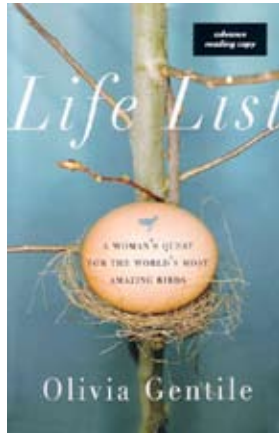
Many times Snetsinger speaks, in her quoted memoirs, of the "Golden Age" of birding, but I can't help thinking that quests such as hers, target birds just for the sake of numbers, have helped bring the demise of that golden age. There would seem to have been four horsemen—carbon fuel consumption, encroachment into wilderness habitat, lack of regard for native peoples, and a proliferation of touring companies. Of course all the world's a trade-off with eco-tourism and all that, but Snetsinger was firmly astride all four horses.

In her introduction, Gentile asks the right questions: what happens to those forced by society into a role they can't accept, how do you respond when you're told you have a terminal disease, and when does human behavior cross the line between dedication and obsession? I think Snetsinger's life is a case study in the answers to these questions, but I probably would have enjoyed the book more if I were not a birder, but simply a person seeking those answers.

Snetsinger was, in the end, a scientist who could not escape from the closet at a stage in her life when she might have truly contributed to ornithology. She may have been on borrowed time, trying to make up for lost time, but by the end of the book her frenetic ramblings across the birding world had become tedious to me, her misadventures irrational not brave, and her mistreatment of her family and her own body shocking. Quite frankly I was glad to finish the book and put it away.

Phoebe Snetsinger did not live well and she did not die well. If there's anything here for birders, it's the message to enjoy the birds for their own sake and to take care of those who care about you. You all know the old cliché—it's not the destination but the journey. Words to live by, but you probably never thought the life of a birder could drive them home so graphically. If you don't believe me or if you're curious, read *Life List*. Personally, as a birder, I wish I'd spent the time out in the woods with my binoculars. Maybe I'm just too old to appreciate stories about obsessed, selfish people. Or maybe I've learned the lesson. One can only hope.

For information on the author, please see www.bloomsbury.com/Authors/books.aspx?tpid=3168



A Review Of Elizabeth Rosenthal's New Book, Birdwatcher

Deva Burns

Jim says he picked the short straw on writing a book review. I really don't know what he is talking about. I read both Olivia Gentile's, *Life List* and Elizabeth Rosenthal's, *Birdwatcher* and came away thinking that people with huge passions and single mindedness have problems with spouses, but they were both worth reading.

Rosenthal's book is a complete guide to Peterson's life from a young boy in Jamestown, New York to his death in 1996 in Old Lyme, Connecticut with many extraordinary adventures in between.

Roger Tory Peterson grew up in a lower socio-economic home with an alcoholic father and a stay at home mother. Roger's passion for birds was stimulated and encouraged by one of his teachers, Blanche Hornbeck at the age of eleven when he, along with the rest of her students, were encouraged to join the Junior Audubon Club.

Roger's passion for birds, which began as a boyish hobby developed into an intellectual pursuit that lasted his entire life. He read all that he could get his hands on about birds and the natural world. The book, *Wild Wings* by Herbert Job, was the probable inspiration for the purchase of his first camera, a purchase that enabled him to capture the true essence of birds in the paintings he made later. He also copied bird prints that he came across in his Junior Audubon magazines.

It is his art that we remember today, the art that is

in his bird guides. What he did in 1934 with the publication of his first field guide was revolutionary. Up until that time people really didn't have a way to study birds and to know what they were seeing except to shoot them and study the skins. His field guides and the conservation movement grew up together. The handy guides he designed to fit into your pocket and be pulled out for reference in the field. This was an extraordinary concept at the time and highlighting the field marks with an arrow was another of his innovations. Today's millions of birdwatchers can thank Peterson for the ease with which birds are now identified, even by beginners.

Roger was an exceptional birder. He could identify just about anything he heard and/or saw. He astounded his birding friends from Europe on one of his first trips there by being the first to identify many of the birds they came across. Roger traveled extensively to gather photos and information to protect his beloved birds. When you think of Peterson, you think of Audubon and conservation. The



two go hand in hand. It is amazing how many of today's well-known birders claim Roger as their mentor—Sibley, Dunne, Harrison, Emanuel, and Kaufman to name a few. That, too, was Roger—always a teacher.

With the success of his field guides and his field work, Roger's economic status grew far beyond his humble beginnings. His extensive field work, however, took him away from his family for months at a time and family vacations, sadly, consisted of just mom and kids.

Rosenthal's book is extremely well written and extensively researched. My one complaint is that she jumped around in time. There was a method to this but I would have preferred a consistent timeline from start to finish. It was disconcerting to read something about his second wife,

then a few pages later his third wife, and then have the next chapter flash back to his second wife.

This is a small complaint. This is an excellent book for getting to know Peterson, and I would heartily recommend it.

For more information on the author, please check her website at www.petersonbird.com.



Time-dated material; do not delay!

miscellaneous

Monthly Meetings

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall, at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), except for our annual banquet in May, the location to be announced. The DBG is located at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona. This is approximately 1/4 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. For a map, please see the DBG website at www.dbg.org/.

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG. There will be signs directing you to the meeting place. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopaaudubon.org. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information

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

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to Jack Follett, membership chair, and he will send it on in to National Audubon for you, or
2. By becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and you will not receive the Audubon magazine or any of the other "benefits" of National Audubon membership, but you will receive a one-year subscription to the Cactus Wren*dition. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk-\$1,000-\$9,999* and California Condor-\$10,000+* *These levels include a signed, framed, photograph by Jim Burns of your designated raptor. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Jack Follett, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the Cactus Wren*dition is to become a "Friend".)

For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail Jack Follett.

Submissions

Copy for The Cactus Wren*dition must be received by the editor by e-mail, (may be on computer diskette, or typed and double-spaced; however, this is not preferred) by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: Cactus Wren*dition Editor, Deva Burns. devaburns@aol.com

Opinions

The opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the National Audubon Society or the Maricopa Audubon Society.

Reprinting of material

Unless stated explicitly in the article, material in The Cactus Wren*dition may be reprinted on other newsletters as long as the material is credited to the original author and to The Cactus Wren*dition.

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