



The Cactus Wren·dition



Volume LXIII, No. 1

Spring 2012



White-crowned Sparrow

Photo by Rich Ditch

Programs Spring 2012

March 6

Birds of Alaska, California and Arizona Larry Arbanas

Larry Arbanas' ability to capture stunning scenes of birds has sent him on expeditions from the River of Raptors in Veracruz, Mexico to Baffin Island in the Arctic. He spent 6 1/2 weeks on barrier islands in Louisiana filming the effect of the BP oil spill on the birds in 2010 and is currently editing footage he shot of the natural beauty of South/Central Oregon. Larry will share bird highlights from Alaska, California and the Sky Islands of Arizona.

Larry Arbanas produces bird,



wildlife, environmental, social issue and documentary films for the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, PBS, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the US Forest Service and the California Audubon Society. His production company is Earthwhile Films. He currently resides in Fountain Hills with his 93 year-young dad.

Webster Auditorium

Committees/Support

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480 969-9893

Hospitality

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Maricopa Audubon Website

<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>

Maricopa Audubon Phone

480-829-8209

The sparrow that is twittering on the edge of my balcony is calling up to me this moment a world of memories that reach over half my lifetime, and a world of hope that stretches farther than any flight of sparrows.

– Donald G. Mitchell

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.

May 1, 2012

Extinctions and Near Extinctions: Causes and Cures

Dr. Noel Snyder

Dr. Snyder will discuss the causes of endangerment of four native bird species: California Condor, Puerto Rican Parrot, Carolina Parakeet and Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Available data reveal a diversity of important negative factors, not just habitat loss, and highlights the crucial need for comprehensive research in designing successful conservation approaches. Two of the species now presumed extinct potentially could have been saved if their causes of endangerment had been better understood. The other two species are recovering from near extinction, thanks to captive breeding and reintroduction programs, but have yet to achieve fully viable wild populations. Habitat problems were evidently a major

factor in the endangerment of only one of the four species.
Dr. Noel

Snyder taught Animal Behavior and Conservation Biology at the University of South Florida in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and



then led field research and conservation programs for the US Fish and Wildlife Service on the California Condor, Puerto Rican Parrot, and Snail Kite in the 1970s and 1980s. Following these efforts he was involved in a variety of parrot conservation programs in Mexico and the West Indies and in reintroduction efforts for the Thick-billed Parrot in Arizona. In more recent years he has conducted intensive historical research on Carolina Parakeets and Ivory-billed Woodpeckers. He has published books and papers on all of these species aimed primarily at analyzing their causes of decline and histories of conservation efforts. Presently retired and living in Portal, Arizona, he continues to write books and papers on natural history subjects. His current efforts are focused on producing a popular book on wildlife of the Everglades.

Shalimar Country Club, Tempe.

Please see page 3 for more information on the banquet.

April 3, 2012

The Intersection, Seventeen Years of Bird Processing on One Street Corner of the World

Tom Cole

Tom Cole will share his observations covering 1,063 trips to the old Neely Ponds (behind the Fire Station on Cooper Road in Gilbert) and his compulsion to organize the voluminous records into a useful database. Cole programmed two quirky but powerful databases from the ground up and published his findings to share his "fine madness." More than just a database report or regional bird guide, Cole's short observations, notes and essays are valuable and interesting to birders and others alike.

Tom Cole is the author of the three popular ESL grammar texts *The Article Book* (1997 Prentice Hall/Regents and University of Michigan Press), *The Preposition Book* 2006, and *Grammar-Writing Connections* 2009 (University of Michigan Press). Cole is also the creator and programmer of the educational arcade-style computer games *Fish Trek*, *Preposition Pinball*, *Carp Derby*, *Diamond Mine*, *ESL Baseball*, and *Catwalk* published by the University of Michigan Press. The Intersection is his first book on bird watching.

This meeting will be held at the Volunteer Headquarters, Marley Education and Volunteer Building, Desert Botanical Gardens. Marley is on the right side of the breezeway on your way to Dorrance Hall. Please check in at admissions and get directions there.



On the cover: White-crowned Sparrow by Rich Ditch

Exposure information: f/8, 1/60 sec., ISO 400, 08:26:35, Focal Length: 600mm

President's Message

by Mark W. Larson

Spring comes early to the Sonoran Desert. Even in early January as I write this, my backyard is beginning to show signs of burgeoning color: red tubular flowers of firecracker penstemons are forming, and the ground is covered with the bright green seedlings of Mexican gold poppies, purple desert lupines, and magenta owl's clover. Yesterday, my short hike in the McDowell Mountains began chilly, but I was warmed by the sight of hillsides carpeted in annual verdure. With a few more well-spaced winter rains



Mark W. Larson

this green groundcover will pop with a rainbow of colors in the coming weeks and months.

Spring will see neotropical migrant birds returning to Arizona and I can hardly wait! All winter, however, we are fortunate to have many species of northern birds overwintering here. Many people see images of some of these birds—sparrows, for

example—in their field guides and imagine them to be impossible to identify in the field. This spring, Maricopa Audubon Society will sponsor a special training

class to help you learn to identify these species, thereby greatly expanding your enjoyment of the winter season of birding. Tom Gaskill will share his abundant enthusiasm for sparrows and sparrow identification in a workshop in late March.

In April, we will see whether our desert-nesting Bald Eagles will again be protected under the Endangered Species Act. Also in April, we will have a 'Far-flung Field Trip' to the Texas coast in hopes of seeing waves of returning eastern warblers and other species not found in Arizona. (See page 8.)

I am looking forward to seeing you in the field, at the monthly meetings, in the Sparrow Identification Training Class, or on a Far-flung Field Trip! 🐦

Maricopa Audubon Society Annual Meeting and Banquet

Maricopa Audubon Society will hold its 58th Annual Meeting and Banquet on Tuesday May 1, 2012 at Shalimar Golf Club, located at 2032 E. Golf Avenue in Tempe. This is one block north of Southern Avenue, midway between McClintock Drive and Price Road (The SR 101). You can access Shalimar from Southern by turning north on either Country Club Way or Fairfield Drive. There is a sign for Shalimar at the intersection of Southern and Fairfield. If you turn north on Country Club (that's Country Club Way in Tempe) there is a sign for Shalimar at the west end of their parking lot.

There will be a no host bar starting at 6:00 p.m. We'll have both a raffle and a silent auction, so plan to arrive early to peruse the auction and raffle tables. Tickets for the raffle will be available at the door. The buffet dinner begins at 7:00 p.m. and advanced reservations are required. The cost will be \$27.00 per person (\$25.00 for "Friends of Maricopa Audubon"). You may send payment in advance or pay at the door—cash or check only, please.

Our program will include induction of the new board and presentation of the Second Annual Herbert Larson Memorial

Award for distinguished and outstanding service to Maricopa Audubon Society.

Our guest speaker for the banquet will be Dr. Noel Snyder, and his topic will be a much overlooked subject, which should be of great interest to birders with a conservation ethic: "Extinctions and Near Extinctions of Birds, Causes and Cures."

Please contact Herb Fibel at (480) 966-5246 hsfibel2004@q.com or Mark Larson (480) 474-4439 larsonwarren@gmail.com to make your reservations. Dress is casual. We look forward to seeing you at the banquet. 🐦

From the Editor: Pollinator Garden: Work and Play

by Emily Morris

It has been one of my greatest pleasures to see the pollinator garden at the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center begin to take shape. The acres surrounding the Center are slowly but surely being transformed by a band of hard-working volunteers into a haven for pollinators and other wildlife. A wildflower meadow, shrubs for shade and food for caterpillars, nectar-



Kids clamber on the new monarch butterfly life cycle play sculpture.

producing flowers and a monarch butterfly life-cycle sculpture will all make the garden a wonderful place to learn about Sonoran Desert plants and animals.

There are a couple of things that make this experience especially wonderful: Firstly, nothing compares to imagining what a finished

project might look like and then beginning to see it physically take shape.

Secondly, I love to see kids and their families realizing that the seemingly small things they do can make a big difference to the natural world they have come to enjoy. If you are interested in joining this pollinator work force, please feel free to contact me! 🐦



Angelina Rope learns to plant Parry's penstemon for the hummingbirds.

Notes & Announcements

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. You can 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 Catalogs

Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalog 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.

E-Newsletter

The MAS e-newsletter includes meeting and field trip reminders, special events, citizen science projects and more. It is a supplement to the Cactus Wren-dition, sent out monthly, Sept.- May. We do not use the emails for anything other than their described purpose. To subscribe, email laurinessel@gmail.com

Birding Community E-Bulletin

The E-Bulletin is 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.

2012 San Diego Bird Festival March 1-4, 2012

The 16th annual festival takes wing on scenic Mission Bay when beginning and expert birders alike flock to view some of the county's 500 plus



Birding by Kayak is just one of 40 field trips offered during the San Diego Bird Festival. Photo by Karen Straus



Birder Melanie McCutchan enjoys a day of pelagic birding off the San Diego coast and Baja's Los Coronados Islands. Photo by Karen Straus

species of birds. Guided field trips, including popular pelagic birding trips, a Birding & Optics EXPO, workshops, social mixers, and bird art classes are offered. Sunday is Family Free Day with special art and nature events planned especially for kids and families. Registration for the four-day festival is \$20 (the fee is waived for Family Free Day events on Sunday). Fees for workshops and field trips vary, with price points to fit every budget, including some specialized trips, workshops, and events that are free. Parking at Marina Village is free. For the latest information and to register, visit www.sandiegoaudubon.org and click on the Bird Festival tab, or email birdfest@cox.net, or call 858-273-7800.

Contact: **Karen Straus**, (619) 804-9056, e-mail kstrau1@gmail.com

2012 Marsh Bird Training Workshop March 20-22, 2012 • Yuma, AZ

This workshop is designed to train participants to identify all the common calls of secretive marsh birds and in understanding how to use the National Marsh Bird Monitoring Protocol.

Location:

Best Western Inn and Suites
1450 S Castle Dome Avenue
Yuma, Arizona
Phone: 928-783-8341

Hotel Reservations:

Please phone the hotel above and refer to the University of Arizona Marsh Bird Workshop
Room rate: \$78.00 + 11.4% tax
Offer expires: March 1, 2012

Field Trips:

Four field trips will allow participants to hear and learn marsh bird vocalizations in a field setting. Field trips will be to Mittry Lake WMA and Imperial National Wildlife Refuge. All participants will be assigned to a carpool group for travel to and from all field trip locations. Participants are

encouraged to carpool in these groups to limit the number of vehicles traveling to the field sites and to simplify logistics.

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.casacaballoblanco.com.

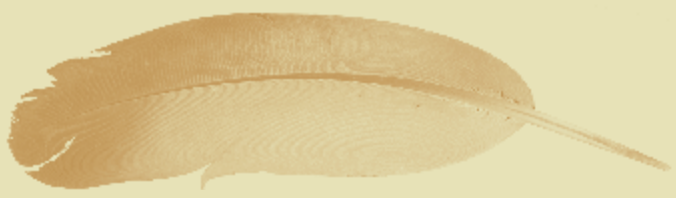
Land of the Quetzal

Rich Kern and his brother, Jim, are looking for twenty partners to join us in the purchase of the 486 acre parcel, which is adjacent to Los Quetzales National Park and across the Savegre River from Los Santos National Preserve in Costa Rica. Preserving an important piece of quetzal habitat is a big part of our motivation in choosing the Savegre tract; the area is one of the best places to see this beautiful bird. Besides birds, it is also possible to see puma, ocelot, the little margay, jaguar and tapir. Half of the shares for the project have been spoken for. If you would like more information and a copy of the DVD please contact Rich Kern at kernnature@aol.com. (N.B. The Kern brothers project is independent from Audubon.)

Chapter discount on bird-friendly chocolate - what's not to love?

Audubon and Theo are pleased to announce the launch of their first co-branded chocolate bar.

Theo Chocolate is the first organic and fair trade certified bean-to-bar chocolate maker in the United States. Theo produces "origin" chocolates, which are identified by the cacao's growing region. Costa Rica was selected as the country of origin for Audubon chocolate because sustainable farming there protects Neotropical



migratory bird habitat. Audubon's Licensing Department worked with our International Alliances Program in approving the farms from which our products are sourced. Theo proudly supports the mission of the National Audubon Society and its diligent work to conserve and restore natural ecosystems that benefit birds, other wildlife and their habitats.

Audubon's 91% cacao bar is a super dark and slightly bitter chocolate that appeals to the "serious chocolate aficionado". Additional products are in development for more mainstream chocolate lovers.

Check out the **next Wrendition** for a review of MAS member, Charlie Babbitt's, article in *Arizona Wildlife Views*, "Visitors from the Gulf."

For Rent in Costa Rica

A 990 sq.ft. house with small yard on Wendy and Mark Bernstein's larger finca (farm), \$250 for only one month or longer. Or \$10 per night per person. In refreshing mountains near San Vito, close to Panama's border, on the way to La Amistad National Park. Utilities included and it is furnished with everything from sheets to pans, Queen orthopedic mattress, flat screen TV, dvd player, tico washing machine, refrigerator, convection oven, propane three-burner stove, wood oven, more. Chickens (eggs) with coop, Talamanca Mountains views, birds, bird trails, nature, country living, peace and quiet* included. We have a struggling greenhouse and you can share that produce, plus lots of free food out in the finca (from avocados to zapote). Bus service is a three minute walk. Excellent road. We use our cell phone as our modem for internet service; you might do something else. We can figure out cost if you want to include some meals, laundry, internet, rides... less for rent if you do not need furnishings. Better for one person or a couple although there can be more beds. Photos may be available. Our local phone in Costa Rica is 8867-8973 or markbaillaw@yahoo.com or reggaew@aol.com *The house is 24 feet from a tiny spur road serving four houses spread, so traffic is extremely light twice a day. It's really not a problem but we want to tell all!

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 gets 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 Laine Seton at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: efaz@efaz.org or (480) 510-5511.

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 operator's 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 be 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. And another from Kenn Kaufman is www.birdsandbeans.com

More Birding and Nature Festivals

www.americanbirding.org, and www.birdinghotspot.com

SUBMISSIONS

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your submissions to the Editor – Emily Morris. Check the back page for address/email. Attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. Please send any pictures to complement your article directly to me as well. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

Arizona Bird Committee

Janet Witzeman

The Arizona Bird Committee held its annual meeting in Tucson December 28, 2011. Every year the eight-member committee elects two new members to replace the two members whose four year term has expired. The two new members who were elected are Chris Benesh and John Yerger. The committee thanked outgoing members Mike Moore and Pierre Deviche.

The other six members who will remain on the committee during 2012 are Andrew Core, Paul Lehman, Narca Moore-Craig, Molly Pollock, Kurt Radamaker, and Gary Rosenberg, secretary.

During the meeting the committee voted to add Rosy-faced Lovebird to the Arizona State List. The species has been nesting in the state since 1989 when it was first discovered nesting in Apache Junction by Mike Moore.

Earlier in the year, the committee voted to add Baikal Teal, Little Gull, and Sedge Wren to the state list.

After much discussion it was decided to remove the following species from the Review List (a list of those species that need to be documented by a written description and/or a photograph): Red-shouldered Hawk, White-eyed Vireo, Palm Warbler, and Orchard Oriole.

The Arizona Bird Committee Report of records that were accepted for the years 2004 through 2009 is in the process of being printed and soon will appear on the Arizona Bird Committee website abc.azfo.org

Maricopa Audubon Society to Hold Elections in April

Republican, Democrat, or Independent? No, I'm not talking about that election; I'm talking about the Maricopa Audubon Society's annual election of officers! This year's election will take place at the General Membership Meeting on Tuesday, April 3, 2012. Any member of this Chapter in good standing is eligible to serve on the Board of Directors and can have his or her name placed on the slate by the Nominating Committee. Should you wish to serve, call one of the Nominating Committee: Mr. Elias Esquer, Ms. Gloria Traicoff, or Mr. Brian Ison.

All Board positions, except the Editor of the Wrendition, are elected by the membership. (The Editor is appointed by the Board.) Nominations will also be taken from the floor before the election, but please advise the Nominating Committee of your interest prior to the election.

If you would like to learn more about any Board position, please feel free to call the Board member who currently holds that position. (Contact information for current Board members can be found on the back cover of this edition of the *Wren_dition*.)

This year's Nominating Committee can be reached at: Elias Esquer (480) 4934, Gloria Traicoff (480) 641-0086, and Brian Ison (480) 315-9031.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

by Mike Plagens

DEC. 2011 – FEB. 2012

CAR POOLING: If you plan on driving yourself please organize your own carpool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places or contact leaders and other participants for car pooling. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 10 cents per mile. Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

LIMIT: Unless otherwise stated trips have a maximum number of participants. Please call ahead of time to make your reservations.

DIFFICULTY LEVELS 1 THROUGH

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

REMINDERS:

- Be courteous to the trip leaders and help cover their gas costs.
- Avoid wearing bright colors. Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water.
- Always bring your binoculars. Bring a scope if recommended.
- Talk quietly or not at all so others can bird by ear.
- 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 Ks, 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.

Michael Plagens, field trip coordinator, has initiated a **Facebook Page**. Use the search engine to find "**Central Arizona Nature Clubs**". Or use: <http://www.facebook.com/>

groups/188713881196421/ Select "Join Group" to continue. Members will be able to share information about upcoming field trips or to arrange their own trips and share the with other members.

Saturday, March 3rd

Rio Salado - 7th Avenue and the Riverbottom

Meet at southwest parking lot (3212 S. 7th Ave.): 7:30 am. For a change, we will bird the river, primarily, west and, time allowing, east of 7th Ave. Depending on conditions and time, we may also bird the north bank. Difficulty: 1: Easy paved descent, then flat. Recommend water durable shoes if muddy. No reservation required.

Leader: Myron Scott at (480) 968-2179 or gaia_3@netzero.net

Friday, March 9th

The "Electric Park" and Red Mountain Park

We'll start about 7:30, and explore these two Mesa areas for a couple of hours. They should give us a nice collection of common desert birds and some waterfowl. Wrap up by about 10 am. Limit 8. Reservations required. Difficulty 1. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip.

Leader: Kathe Anderson (Info & reservations: kathe.coot@cox.net)

Tuesday, March 13th

Afternoon at Rio Salado: Teals, Toucans and Tacos

Meet Tuesday at 2:00 pm in the parking lot northeast corner of the Central Avenue bridge at the Salt River in Phoenix. We'll take a leisurely walk searching for desert, urban and water birds. Following the walk, you can join us for an optional visit to Chico's Tacos, 7th St. & McDowell where there's a lively mural of southern Mexico. We can imagine and discuss birding in Central America while we eat. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Mike Plagens mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224

Saturday, Mar 17

South Mountain: An Eastern Approach

7 am- 11 am A fun and easy walk with highlights of desert birds, wildflowers, butterflies, and petroglyphs. Difficulty: Easy. No reservation required.

Leader: Myron Scott at (480) 968-2179 or gaia_3@netzero.net for additional information.

Saturday, March 24th

Northsight Park, Scottsdale

Our last field trip to this easy-to-get-to and easy-to-navigate park turned up a wide variety of birds including spectacular views of an immature Cooper's Hawk. The pathways are handicap accessible. We'll see many common urban and desert birds and might just find some rarities. The leader will carefully point out and describe the important identifying characteristics of the birds making this an excellent choice for novices. Begin 7:00 am and finish before 11:00 am. Limit 12. Reservations required. Difficulty 1

Leader: Brian Ison (info & reservations with **Mike**, mjplagens@arizonensis.org 602-459-5224

Monday, March 26th

Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Walk with a Naturalist

The habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of wildlife. Enjoy a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. The walks are not fast-paced and the terrain is easy. There is a suggested \$5 donation to the Chandler Environmental Education Center. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Roads. 9 am to 11 am starting at the Red-Tailed Hawk Pavilion.

Leader: Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@gmail.com

Mid-April

Gulf Coast in East Texas

Check out Mark Larson's description of this fantastic birding trip on page 8.

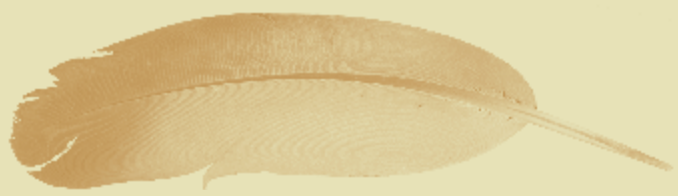
Friday, April 6th

Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Walk with a Naturalist

The habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of wildlife. Enjoy a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. The walks are not fast-paced and the terrain is easy. There is a suggested \$5 donation to the Chandler Environmental Education Center.

Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Roads. 8:30 am to 10 am starting at the Red-tailed Hawk Pavilion.

Leader: Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@gmail.com

**Sunday, April 8th****Bull Dog Canyon, Goldfield Mountains**

Meet 6:00 am for an easy hike into the Goldfield Mountains from the north. We'll follow the Great Western Trail off the Bush Hwy just east of Usery Pass. There's no surface water for most of the year, so the toughest of Sonoran Desert birds are the ones we'll see. Rock Wrens and Black-throated Sparrows are tougher by far than your run-of-the-mill bulldog! There should be plenty of spring wildflower and insect activity for us to see as well. Contact the leader for meeting place and additional details. Difficulty 2.

Leader: Mike Plagens

mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224

Saturday, April 21st**Rio Verde Ranch, east of Scottsdale**

We'll see many common desert and riparian birds, making this trip an excellent opportunity for novices to practice. Neotropical migrants will be coming though and we should see some of them. The leader will carefully point out and describe the important identifying characteristics of the birds. Begin 6:00 am and finish before 11:00 am. Limit 12. Reservations required. Difficulty 1

Leader: Brian Ison (info & reservations with Mike, mjplagens@arizonensis.org /602-459-5224).

Monday, April 23rd**Jewel of the Creek (North of Cave Creek)**

We'll start about 5:30 am in Scottsdale, explore this exquisite migrant trap for about 2-3 hours, and wrap up near the coffee shop at El Pedregal. We should see common desert species, orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos and flycatchers. Wrap up by about 10 am. Limit 8. Reservations required. Difficulty 2-3. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip.

Leader: Kathe Anderson (Info & reservations: kathe.coot@cox.net)

Saturday, April 28,**Picketpost Trail and Oak Flat**

Starting at 6:30 am (I'll bring some coffee). After: Proceed to Boyce Thompson Arboretum or join the leader for lunch and an optional beer at Los Hermanos, THE place to eat in Superior.

Difficulty: 2: Limited uphill, mostly flat. Limit 10.

Leader: Myron Scott at (480) 968-2179 or gaia_3@netzero.net for additional information.

Friday, May 4th**Seven Springs (North of Scottsdale)**

We'll start about 5:15 am and take a leisurely drive up to Seven Springs, stopping along the way whenever we hear or see anything that is worth exploring. We'll wander around at least two areas of Seven Springs before eating an early bag lunch and returning to Scottsdale by about 11:30. We should see common desert species, plus whatever raptors, orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos and flycatchers might be travelling through that day. Limit 8. Reservations required. Difficulty 1-2. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip.

Leader: Kathe Anderson (Info & reservations: kathe.coot@cox.net)

Saturday, May 20,**Tempe Salt River**

Meet 6:30 am at Tempe Center for the Arts. We will caravan from site to site with ample opportunity for people to leave at will. We will start at the lower dam and pedestrian bridge over the Town Lake, then explore a couple North Shore sites including the Lopiano Wetlands, and end at Tempe Marketplace. Difficulty: 1. Please feel free to bring scopes. No reservation required.

Leader: Myron Scott at (480) 968-2179 or gaia_3@netzero.net for additional information.

Thursday, May 31st**Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Walk with a Naturalist**

The habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of wildlife. Enjoy a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. The walks are not fast-paced and the terrain is easy. There is a suggested \$5 donation to the Chandler Environmental Education Center.

Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Roads. 8 am to 10 am starting at the Red-Tailed Hawk Pavilion.

Leader: Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@gmail.com

FIELD TRIP REPORTS

Reach 11 Park, Saturday, Nov 12th, 2011
by Michael Plagens

A small group of Maricopa Audubon members met at the side of the road off Tatum just north of the Arizona Canal in the early morning. There are trails on both sides of the road into Reach 11 Park, a City of Phoenix recreation site. Led by Myron Scott of Tempe, we found that bird life was decidedly scarce –



A Great Horned Owl eyes a group of bird watchers below through a thick tangle of blue palo verde.

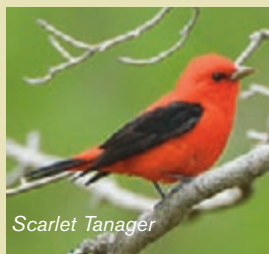
something that can hardly be predicted several months in advance when a trip is scheduled. Of course that didn't prevent us from enjoying cool dawn temperatures, the company of fellow nature-lovers, and a warm sun rising above the flood control dam. This recreation area stretches seven miles from Cave Creek Rd. all the way to Scottsdale with many more miles of quiet pathways through mesquite and palo verde bosque, salt bush and grassy areas. Occasionally sparrows of several species can be found in abundance but the only sparrows this time were White-crowned Sparrows and Abert's Towhees. After several miles of flat walking our most interesting finds were a group of Horned Larks and a very cooperative Great Horned Owl! 🦉

Spring Migration on the Coast of Texas

by Mark Larson

APRIL 19-26, 2012

Maricopa Audubon Society members are invited on a journey in search of bright and colorful neotropical migrants as they return to the United States. Most of the species we will see do



Scarlet Tanager

not breed in the western U.S. We will visit several migration stopover sites whose reputations

for outstanding spring birding are well-deserved: High Island, Sabine Woods, Bolivar Flats, Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, and other premier locations.

In addition to returning warblers, orioles, grosbeaks, buntings, and

vireos, we will also visit breeding colonies of egrets, Roseate Spoonbills and, possibly, night-herons. There will be returning shorebirds, too, in great abundance.

Leading this adventure will be President Mark Larson, a native



Roseate Spoonbill



Painted Bunting

Texan and a veteran of this itinerary. If you have ever thought of seeing this spectacle, this will be a great opportunity—costs for the trip will be substantially less than for a commercial trip to the same destination.

For more information, please contact Mark by telephone or email (contact details on the back cover of the Wrendition). 🐦

Sparrow Identification Workshop

WITH TOM GASKILL • SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2012 • 3:00-5:00 PM

**Franciscan Renewal Center
St. Agnes Room
5802 E. Lincoln Dr
Scottsdale, AZ 85253**

Learn to enjoy sparrows by discovering the keys to their field identification. Every species has a unique combination of shape, behavior, habitat, and voice. Discover those keys and sparrows are transformed from 'little brown jobs' to fascinating, delightful little creatures, full of personality. We will invest two hours in the classroom learning the secrets of sparrow ID and being introduced to their ecology. On the following morning, we will take a field trip to apply and reinforce those skills.

This workshop is in conjunction with the Sparrow Identification Field Trip. You do not need to go on the field trip to attend the workshop. Maximum 25.

The Franciscan Renewal Center is on 25 acres. Visitors can stroll around the desert pathways and visit a small labyrinth and many bird feeders.

Registration required: \$10,
Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614,
laurienessel@gmail.com

Sparrow Identification Field Trip

**WITH TOM GASKILL
SUNDAY, APRIL 1, 2012**

April is prime for learning sparrow identification due to the most diversity, greatest numbers and most singing at this time. Tom Gaskill will lead this trip to Granite Reef, Butcher Jones, and the area near the Beeline and Bush Highways. This specialized field trip is in conjunction with the Sparrow Identification Workshop. You do



*Black-throated Sparrow
by Tom Gaskill*

not need to attend the workshop to go on the field trip. Maximum 15.

Registration required: \$10,
Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614,
laurienessel@gmail.com 🐦

A Visit to a Wildlife-Friendly Backyard

by Gillian Rice

backyard habitat

Susan Ahearn welcomes me to her home. A pleasant view through floor to ceiling windows attracts my gaze. I feel as if I am already in her desert garden, a private peaceful oasis in the center of our metropolitan area.

Stepping out on to the small brick patio, I hear an Anna's Hummingbird declaring its territory. Several Gambel's Quail scuttle away from the area under the bird table. An Abert's Towhee calls to its mate.

Susan begins by pointing out a desert wash that divides the backyard. Her husband, Bill, provides some background: "When we bought the house in the late 1980s, the yard consisted of a large

We step over to another bed planted with aloe, chuparosa, and fairy duster. "This is my 'official' hummingbird garden," announces Susan. A Costa's Hummingbird displaying its gorget flies over on cue to visit the feeder hung in an acacia. Tufted evening primrose plants snuggle under the tree, protected from rabbits with small wire fencing. These are perennials, which easily reseed to spread around

the yard. Fragrant blooms relished by sphinx moths open at sunset in the spring and summer. I can attest to the fact that if you are patient, you can watch the blooms unfurl. It's like watching a nature documentary – but much more exciting, because you're there!

Next, Susan shows me a small Baja section with organ pipe cactus, a cardon cactus, and a Mexican jumping bean.

We cross a wooden bridge over the wash where plantings represent Arizona's higher elevations: Arizona cypress, sugar bush, and buckwheat. We pause to listen and watch as bees feed on the inconspicuous but fragrant flowers of the bitter condalia tree. Susan shows me a Cactus Wren nest.

As we stroll along the winding path, we examine a vital species for any gardener serious about attracting birds: desert hackberry. Susan beams: "One May, we had eight to ten Lazuli Buntings in this tree. It also attracts Phainopepla – they seem to know exactly when the berries will be ripe! As well as food, this tree provides goodnesting sites."

Another stop for a screwbean mesquite. "Its size is more fitting for my yard," says Susan. "The Chilean mesquites grow too large. The Peach-faced Lovebirds enjoy the screwbean pods."

A water feature in the shape of a simple small cemented depression next to an irrigation bubbler provides supplemental water. "A king snake drank from this," Susan tells me. "I'd never seen a snake drink before. Then it moved through the water."

Wildlife benefits from three things: food, water, and cover. Susan has chosen plants to provide a variety of foods: nectar, pollen, fruits (pods and berries, for example). She also provides supplemental birdseed. "At the side of the house, we have citrus that the previous owner planted. I've discovered that if I place half a grapefruit on the bird table, the birds eat it quickly," she says.

At various places in her yard, she shows me how she leaves plant litter under the trees and bushes. "This gives the birds foraging places as they hunt for insects," she explains. "The lizards like to forage and hide there too. It's important not to be too conscientious when cleaning up."

We notice that quail are also hiding under the bushes. A tomatillo shrub provides good shade as well as cover. Cover makes for a handy escape when Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks

swoop over the yard. "Christmas cactus is dense and good plant cover," adds Susan.

A Harris' antelope squirrel scurries along the wash. "We get the occasional round-tailed ground squirrel, too," says Susan, and roadrunners now and then."

Alongside the wash, desert willow and ironwood thrive because of the pooling of

water left by seasonal rains. Curve-billed Thrashers nest each year in the chain fruit cholla cactus on the bank.



Susan stands proudly in her wildlife-friendly garden.



A California king snake checks out the pond.

“A king snake drank from this,” Susan tells me. “I’d never seen a snake drink before. Then it moved through the water.”

bricked patio, a small swimming pool, and the wash. At the far side of the wash, there wasn't even any landscaping and the owner's dog had pulverized the area."

"We chose to reduce the amount of hardscape and focus on the wash as the central feature of our backyard," adds Susan. Her knowledge of plants and experience as a volunteer horticultural aide at the Desert Botanical Garden helped her plan the landscape and know which plants attract birds and butterflies. She uses no pesticides or herbicides.

"I try to use native plants as much as possible," she explains. "Even though it's not a native, *Lantana* is a magnet for butterflies. I'm growing a purple-pink bed around the *Lantana*, with *Ruellia* – the hummingbirds love that – and a pink variety of *Globe Mallow*, as well as *Owl Clover*, and *Desert Bluebell*!"

A Visit to a Wildlife-Friendly Backyard (cont.)

Continued from page 9

Susan relates how goldfinches feast on the seeds of Mexican hat. Her *Zizyphus* provides a place for the Verdin to nest and fruits for the mockingbird – always a vigorous defender of its food supply. Woodpeckers and thrashers enjoy the Engelmann prickly pear fruit, as do ground squirrels. Rabbits wait for fruit to drop to the ground. A pair of Phainopepla

yet others. For example, one study revealed that the abundance and species richness of lizards in Tucson decreased as housing density increased.

Species that are habitat specialists tend to be the most severely impacted by urbanization, while habitat generalists such as coyotes and raccoons do well. Some do so well that they become

over-abundant and can threaten human health and safety and cause property damage. However, some of the species that do well also enrich the lives of suburban dwellers.

There is little doubt about the conservation potential of private backyards. Of course, the Ahearns are fortunate to have a desert wash running through their property. Their plants are able to benefit from the seasonal



The garden in full spring splendor.

has nested in Susan's desert fern tree. White-winged Doves are keen on the hopbush and jojoba fruits.

In 1933, Aldo Leopold wrote: "A pair of Wood Thrushes is more valuable to a village than a Saturday evening band concert, and costs less." We have no Wood Thrushes to be heard singing in the Valley (as they are an eastern species), but we might substitute the hooting of a Great Horned Owl, the night-time singing of the mockingbird, or the howl of a coyote. Susan has also heard Elf Owls and screech owls calling in her yard.

"One of the challenges of creating a backyard habitat is that neighbors might not be able to or even want to do the same," Susan notes. An article by Mark Goddard and colleagues refers to the importance of the surrounding habitat of adjacent properties. Clusters of wildlife-friendly yards are the most effective.

Although research shows that birds in U.S. cities are able to exploit urban tree patches at broad scales from as little as 0.08 to 33 square miles, urbanization is a significant factor in both current and predicted animal species extinctions because it fragmenting effect on the landscape. Fragmentation destroys habitat for some species, modifies habitat for others, and creates new habitats for

rains. Making your yard attractive to wildlife is always a work in progress, but work that is sure to delight. Small steps can bring special rewards. Susan is particularly proud of her cardon and saguaro cacti, both of which she planted about twenty years ago. Thrilled, she explains that Gila Woodpeckers made holes in each this past summer. "I hope they will get a chance to nest in one of the holes when the cactus hardens," she says. "We have a few starlings, but I hope they don't steal the holes!" 🐦



White-winged Doves feast on saguaro fruit.

RESOURCES FOR CREATING YOUR WILDLIFE BACKYARD HABITAT

http://www.azgfd.gov/w_c/landscaping_wildlife_garden.shtml

Arizona Game and Fish Department provides guidelines on how to design a wildlife-friendly garden.

http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/

National Audubon Society's 'Audubon at Home' project offers participants the chance to take the 'Healthy Yard Pledge' and commit to several yard management principles.

<http://www.nwf.org/backyard/>

The National Wildlife Federation Backyard Habitat Certification Scheme includes over 150,000 certified backyards.

LEARN MORE ABOUT URBAN ECOLOGY

<http://caplter.asu.edu/>

Metropolitan Phoenix is one of two urban areas to be studied in the Long-Term Ecological Research Project funded by the National Science Foundation. Scientists study the structure and function of the urban ecosystem, assess the effects of urban development on the Sonoran Desert, and understand the distribution and perception of ecosystem services in metropolitan Phoenix.

"Urban wildlife ecology and conservation: A brief history of the discipline" by Lowell Adams. *Urban Ecosystems* Vol. 8 2005, pp 139-156.

"Scaling up from gardens: Biodiversity conservation in urban environments" by Mark Goddard and colleagues. *Trends in Ecology and Evolution*. February 2010, pp 90-98.

Birding Close to Home

by David Chorlton

birding close to home

Writing isn't an activity that functions according to working hours. Thinking about an unresolved issue in a piece of fiction continues even when the text being worked on is no longer close at hand, and poetry isn't simply a matter of language; it is a process that invariably utilizes observations made as the poet goes about daily business. Life for those who love birds is much the same. We may take a trip to a certain area we know to promise colorful or rare species, but looking around on daily walks can provide equal pleasure and an occasional surprise if we stay alert.

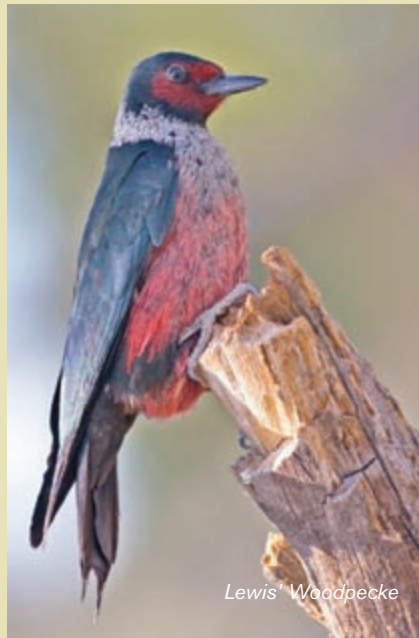
I've been looking around extra carefully since I noticed a hawk sitting in a dead tree close to 3rd Avenue, about half a mile from our house, and noted its gray plumage and the gray streaks across the breast. Yes, I know

it shouldn't have been what I thought it was, but at least four times over the course of that winter I saw the bird from different angles and well enough to know it wasn't one of the usual hawks we see locally: Red-tailed, Cooper's,

or Harris'. The pleasures of watching birds have never relied on making ground-breaking sightings for us, rather watching the habits of Abert's Towhees, following the expansion of the lovebird immigrants (with their green feathers not green cards), or spotting the occasional Red-naped Sapsucker that spends the winter in our neighborhood. And watching mockingbirds catch the

last insects of a long summer day can be interesting, too.

After seeing a hawk recently at the top of a tall wooden pole on a cloudy day and noticing those grey streaks again, I started obsessing and hoping that I'd eventually get a good enough view to be sure. When I spotted a hawk high over 3rd Avenue and Encanto Boulevard some weeks later, on a clear day, and seeing the black-and-



white bands on its tail, the haunting thought returned. So, I quickly recruited Roberta to join me with binoculars and camera, and away we went. Any bird can disappear in

twenty minutes, and this one did.

Let's head for the park in case it went there. From the parking lot we saw a lady standing by the water with binoculars trained on something. Birders are invariably easier to spot than the birds. They're dressed for comfort not for looks. They are too absorbed to hear the first thing said to them. Are you looking for something in particular? Not noticing

what's going on around you can also happen during thinking about how a character in a story will act. When the lady heard me, she responded with that familiar mix of enthusiasm and adventure that goes with anyone who will drive from Apache Junction to central Phoenix just to catch a glimpse of a certain bird.

A single bird

can make some people happy, very happy. We talked long enough for me to learn that a Zone-tailed Hawk had been seen nearby, which matched the bird that had drawn us out here in the first place. But the lady from Apache Junction was looking for a woodpecker, and held the sheet of paper with printed instructions taken from a web site on where the Lewis' Woodpecker had been seen. So, the three of us walked over to the Clubhouse and took up position to prove that point about happiness, even when the times are less sunny than the weather.

We watched a Lewis' Woodpecker picking and carrying supplies from a leafy tree to store in a couple of palms fifty yards to the west for three round trips before we left the lady to her glasses and camera with the rest of the afternoon to enjoy watching it. Seeing the woodpecker was an unexpected treat, but it can't quite eclipse the sighting of a person who would make the long drive home in a state of contentment enjoyed by few. 🐦

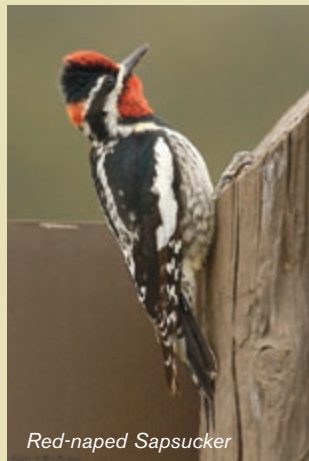
“When the lady heard me, she responded with that familiar mix of enthusiasm and adventure that goes with anyone who will drive from Apache Junction to central Phoenix just to catch a glimpse of a certain bird.”

16th Annual Big Sit! Follow-up

by Herb Fibel

Though the Annual Maricopa Audubon Kathryn F. Anderson Granite Reef Asterisks' Big Sit! takes place shortly after the Wren-dition submission deadline for the winter newsletter, meaning that a post Sit! report is a little untimely, I hope you will enjoy the recap from this wonderful day!

On Sunday October 9th, with near perfect weather, seven intrepid birders spotted or heard from our 17-foot circle by the Granite Reef Reservoir a total of 67 species of birds, including six species never



Red-naped Sapsucker

before recorded on our Big Sit! This brings our total number of species over the 16 years to 140. Incredible! The concept underlying the Big Sit! is that if you sit in one place long enough, every bird in the area will come by eventually. For the first time since we sat down at

this site we had to make do without our ace birder, Pete Moulton; but with

the able assistance of Sit! veterans Cynthia Donald, Tom and Rosalinda Partel, Adam and Phyllis Martin, and Kathe Anderson, we managed to pull it off in grand style.

New species that made the list this year were: Red-naped Sapsucker, Western Wood Pewee, Black-tailed Gnatcatcher, Wilson's Warbler, Western Tanager, and Brown-headed Cowbird.

We're pleased to report that we raised over \$1,500 for Maricopa Audubon causes. Our thanks to the many contributors, but especially to our business sponsors—Gold Bar Espresso (3141 S. McClintock, Tempe) and Eye 4 Art, at

www.eye4art.net. 🐦

Christmas Bird Counts with two Maricopa Audubon Board Members

Lisa Fitzner meets an 'older gentleman'

When I volunteered for the Christmas Bird Count last winter I knew I would be in for quite a bit of hiking over what would probably be rough terrain. I have to admit I was a little surprised to see an older gentleman as one of the group. "How," I thought, "could this man possibly keep

up with us?" After the first few miles, my legs started to ache a bit; no problem I thought, I'm a tough hiker. I couldn't help but notice the older gentleman seemed to be doing just fine. In fact, he was moving along at a faster clip than I was! After I started speaking with him, I realized that looks can be deceiving.

Not only had he just returned from climbing Kilimanjaro, he had climbed most of the mountains in the U.S. and hiked at altitudes that probably would have killed me. By the end of the day, all I could think of was resting my tired bones; the older gentleman was going hiking - the next day! 🐦

Experiencing the Gila River CBC

by Herb Fibel

2011 marked the 31st Gila River CBC. On January 2, 1982, John and Dana Shipley paddled down the Gila southwest of Buckeye tallying all the birds they could find and establishing what was to become the enduring Gila River CBC. The following year he recruited such Arizona birding luminaries as Bob Bradley, Chuck Kangas, Dick Todd, Terry Johnson, Ruth Patterson, Tice Supplee, Ron and Carolyn Engle-Wilson and newcomers my wife Joyce and me. I have done the count every year since, with the exception of 2002, when the doctors refused to let me get out of bed after massive open heart surgery.

The Circle area encompasses mostly farmland, with cotton and alfalfa, but includes Robbin's Butte, Gillespie Dam, Arlington, the largely dry Hassayampa River bed, an intermittently flowing Gila River, the now famous thrasher site, irrigation canals, feedlots, and overflow catchponds. Although growing in number each year, there are still very few homesites. In our area, Area 3, there is the tiny community of Palo Verde, consisting of a consolidated school, a church, a cemetery, and about ten residences. There are not a lot of trees, but there are a couple of large ponds. There's also now a sod farm. Although not actually in the Circle, the steam pillars of the Palo Verde nuclear plant

can be seen easily to the west.

Over the years bird diversity in the area has been nothing short of awesome. Some examples of rare and unusual birds seen include Red Crossbills, Chestnut-collared Longspurs, a Western Tanager, Sandhill Cranes, American White Pelicans, Bald Eagles, White-tailed (aka Black-shouldered) Kites, a White Ibis, Ruddy Ground Doves, Long-billed Curlews, a Common Goldeneye, Lawrence's Goldfinches, and the first Eurasian Collared Doves found in the Valley.

On December 28th, under the capable area co-leadership of Cynthia Donald, our crew, ranging in age from 81 to age 11, identified 67 species. 🐦

Pat Beall

... an inspiration to many a beginning birder, passed away on November 11, 2011. At various times during the 1980s she served Maricopa Audubon as secretary, treasurer, membership chairman, education chairman and mailing chairman. Pat was a birding authority that many birders turned to, including this writer, on questions ranging from the best place to find unusual birds to what kind of binoculars one should buy. She had an ABA Area life list of over 700 species, and a yard list at her home in Ahwatukee adjacent to a golf course pond of over 100 species, including a Reddish Egret (a bird I have yet to see). In her birding expeditions she was a goodwill ambassador for the avocation of birding and for Maricopa Audubon throughout the U.S.

Pat proudly served in the U.S. Navy as an aerographer's mate from 1944-1946.

She is survived by her husband, Wade, of 65 years, five children, eight grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

In her honor and memory, the family suggests a donation in her name to the Maricopa Audubon Society, c/o 3255 S. Dorsey Lane, No. 2004, Tempe, AZ, 85282. 🐦

“Once, as we watched a pair of Common Ravens cavorting in the updraft at a wilderness cliff face, she confided a fervent desire, if there were an afterlife, to return to this world as one of those notoriously spectacular aerialists, seemingly so full of sass and vinegar and the sheer joy of life. Pat Beall. She changed my world forever. My world without her will never be the same. I will be watching ravens now. Watching for some sign.”

— Jim Burns, who considered Pat his “birding mentor.”

in memory

A second Smith's Longspur in Arizona after 58 years!

Bob Witzeman

“Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much the larger and better in every way.”

— John Muir 1838-1914

in Buckeye, AZ. Kurt had seen it some years earlier in southern California. He reported in careful detail its field marks and described its classic “rattle” call on the



Smith's Longspur photo by Carl Lundblad of Tucson, AZ, taken Jan. 7, 2012 at Buckeye, Arizona. Photo courtesy of AZFO website (azfo.org). Photo info: Canon Power Shot SX20 IS; ISO: 80; F-stop 5.7; Exposure 1/640 sec; Focal Length 1452mm (35mm equivalent). Field marks include finely (vertically) streaked, buffy breast.

According to *Birds of Arizona* (This book was authored by Phillips, Marshall, and Monson, 1964.), there was one reported Smith's Longspur record for Arizona on April 24, 1953. It was collected in the White Mountains near Springerville by Allan Phillips. Since then there have been no reported state records until New Years Day 2012 when it was observed and heard by Kurt Radamaker on Jan 1, 2012. Kurt's and his wife Cindy's sighting was from a grassy field near Pecos Road

Arizona-New Mexico Birding List website on Jan. 2.

Since Kurt's historic web report a great many birders have joyously added that bird to their life/state lists. Janet, Mark Larson, Liz Hatcher, and I were there a few days later. There were at least a dozen parked cars and the field was full of birders.

We cautiously walked to where one group of birders appeared to have located it. The longspur patiently waited while those present focused their telescopes on it and all of us viewed its buff-colored, finely streaked breast and other field marks.

Scott Burge called me that

A second Smith's Longspur in Arizona after 58 years! (cont.)

Continued from page 13

afternoon to see if I had seen it and wanted directions. Three days later, on arrival, there were some 30 parked vehicles! The field was swarming with birders. I figured our chances would be slim but Scott's youthful ears quickly picked up its diagnostic flight rattle call as it flew overhead. We quickly walked in the direction of the bird's flight. In seconds, it landed directly in front of us. We had our scopes on it immediately, yielding diagnostic views.

I had brought along a lightweight point-and-shoot camera hoping for a photo. However, other birders quickly gathered around our scopes and I spent the time excitedly pointing out the field marks to the others who came up to us. In the excitement, I forgot I had my camera with me. Within minutes, birders from all directions in the field saw our scopes pointed at the bird and descended upon us. Needless to say, the bird flushed as the crowd approached. My photo chances vanished. There already were several other identifiable photos on the Arizona Field Ornithologists website (azfo.org). It is just that I had wanted to try my luck as an amateur with my point-and-shoot camera. A day or so later an able Tucson birder, Carl Lindblad, put on the AZFO website a great "point-and-shoot" photo. As can be seen in his accompanying

photo, his camera handily revealed the difficult and obscure field marks of this longspur. The sex was indeterminate but Lindblad's great photos left no question of species ID.

Birds of Arizona (U. of Arizona Press, 1964) described in its section on longspurs the best way to identify longspurs (at that time), namely: "... the observer should arm himself with a good field guide, a shotgun (a 12 gauge double-barrel, complete with .410 and .22 auxiliaries), and a deft pair of ears, and that he go out and seek the birds in order to add to our understanding of their status and numbers in the state."

This longspur's breeding territory in Canada and Alaska is in habitat where the shrub and conifer vegetation are at timberline and represent scraggly, stunted vegetation growing only a foot or so in height. This is the interface between arctic tundra and boreal forest. The Smith's Longspur breeding habitat starts along the southwest shore of the Hudson Bay east of Churchill, Manitoba and extends west through the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Territory, and Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Also, separate breeding ranges are located in SE Alaska and SW Yukon Territory. It normally winters in Iowa, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas in open fields with short, dry grass. 🐦

SMITH'S LONGSPUR BREEDING CYCLE

The following are some of the most interesting points about the Smith's Longspur breeding cycle information obtained from "The Birds of North America," No. 34, 1993, by Dr. James Briskie, Queens University, Ontario. It is a massive, 18-volume work covering the life histories of all N. American birds.

"Each female copulates with 1 to 3 males for a single clutch of eggs, and each male with 1 to 3 females... DNA fingerprinting revealed 75% of 12 broods were of mixed paternity... A female thus typically copulates with an alpha male for the first few days of the copulation period, then switches to a second (and rarely third) male until laying is completed."

"During the copulation period males guard their mates closely by following females and chasing away intruding males. Guarding and chasing by alpha males is most intense just before the first egg is laid, while guarding by beta males peaks on the day the third egg is laid... After a female switches to her beta or gamma male, her alpha male no longer guards her, usually because he is guarding and mating a second female."

"After egg laying is complete, males and females do not associate closely until hatching, at which point most males return to assist females in feeding nestlings."

"Nests are placed beside a small rhododendron or dwarf birch or amongst tufts of sedges or grasses."

"Nest construction is by female only... and takes 3 to 4 days to complete. Nest material lining includes caribou hair, ptarmigan feathers, hair, wool, lichens... Brooding is primarily by females but males will assist."

"Young leave the nest 7-9 days after hatching. After leaving the nest, chicks disperse widely over territory and adults appear to divide the brood so that each chick is fed by only one parent: chicks are fed for about 3 weeks after fledging."

Birds of North America noted that Smith's Longspurs were rarely reported on Christmas Counts though they have been at times reported in large numbers in *Audubon Field Notes* as migrants in southern Manitoba. In Arizona, Lapland, McCown's, and Chestnut-collared are sporadic to irregular though they may be regular in various locations.

Nature through the Artist's Eye: Christina Scherer



Christina enjoys capturing birds in their busy lives through her art, creating playful scenes in a detailed but soft, impressionistic style. Her oil paintings can be described as "old world" and "charming." Much of her inspiration comes from the remarkable beauty of the

Arizona desert, with its warm colors, rugged terrain and diverse plant and animal life.

Originally from Sweden, Christina grew up with a sketchpad in her hand. She drew her first inspiration from her uncle, Curt Norberg, a well-known artist in Stockholm. Later in life she moved to Arizona, where she studied art, marketing and graphic design at Northern Arizona University. In her free time she volunteers with non-profit organizations like Audubon and Liberty Wildlife, a Scottsdale-based rehabilitation and education organization. She believes wildlife is an essential part of our natural world and that we, as humans, have an obligation to help injured wildlife that are impacted by our activities.

Christina starts by using photography to capture her subjects, and then allows her compositions to tell their own story. She is intrigued by the vibrant colors of the Southwest and how the medium of oil brings them to life.

Her art, prints and cards can be found at local galleries and stores in Arizona. Originals can be seen at Hazel Gallery in downtown Phoenix during "First Fridays." You can also see her originals at Z House Gallery in Flagstaff, AZ. Her cards and prints can be found online and in local stores like the Hummingbird House in Sedona. Christina also participates in local fine art events and holiday shows, including the "Audubon Gifts from Nature Art Festival."

She works full time as a graphic designer and is the sole proprietor of Scherer Art and Design.

To learn more about Christina's work, please visit her website at www.schererart.com.



"Taking a Bow" - Oil on Canvas
I was inspired by this beautiful Lesser Goldfinch playing on a fence, with his bright yellow feathers glowing in the sun and the pop of color from the desert blooms around him.



"Splashing the Party" - Oil on Wood
This is a composed scene depicting a group of unsuspecting sparrows in the middle of bathing, when an un-uninvited House Finch appears, and takes center stage.



"Potluck Social" - Oil on Canvas
This joyful gathering of blue birds is a composed scene based on a variety of inspirations, including my mom's old pot and backyard photos.



"Christmas Buffet" - Oil on Wood
This detail from the painting depicts a female Northern Cardinal sitting on a branch full of berries, while her male counterpart has to wait his turn on the branches above.



"I Forgot the Lyrics" - Oil on Canvas
This very playful Anna's Hummingbird caught my attention at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix, AZ while "dancing" around the sea of flowers below. She kept coming back to this branch for breaks.

Maricopa Audubon Society

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miscellaneous

Monthly Meeting

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall or Webster Auditorium, 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. Webster is in the far southeast side of the gardens. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopa-audubon.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* 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 Scott Burge, 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* by mail. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk-\$1,000-\$9,999 and California Condor-\$10,000+. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Scott Burge, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the *Cactus Wren* 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 Scott Burge.

Submissions

Copy for *The Cactus Wren* must be received by the editor by e-mail, by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: The Cactus Wren Editor, Emily Morris: monarchmorris@gmail.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* may be reprinted on other newsletters as long as the material is credited to the original author and to *The Cactus Wren*.

This publication is printed on recycled paper.



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