



The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LIII, No. 2

Summer 2005



Ash-Throated Flycatcher

Maricopa Audubon Meetings & Programs Sept. 2004 - May 2005

Please join us for a terrific year of speakers with a wide range of topics – birding in Russia (or Kenya), hummingbirds of Costa Rica, discovering our North American owls, prowling with the Mexican jaguar, dealing with conservation issues in Utah and Arizona, updating on the Rio Salado Audubon Center, exploring the Gilbert Riparian Institute and learning about the birds, wildlife and cultures of New Guinea.

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

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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.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, book sales, 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. There will be signs directing you to the meeting. 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 at Pete's 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue in Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course), will be in effect for the October through April meetings. 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 at Pete's average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

May 3, 2005

Dave Pearson New Guinea: Birding at the Edge of the Stone Age Dr. Pearson is a research professor in the School of Life Sciences at ASU. An avid birder, Dave and his wife, Nancy, often post interesting local sightings on the birdwg. His publications include a series of "Traveler's Wildlife Guides" to: Brazil, Amazon and Pantanal; Peru; and Ecuador and the Galapagos. Dave says that he is an "excited participant" at this year's banquet as he talks about birds, wildlife and the diversity of cultures in New Guinea.

NOTE: This program will be associated with our Annual Banquet to be held at Shalimar Country Club.

Due to a printing delay, Troy Corman will present the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas program at our September, 2005 meeting. Have a great summer!

From the Editor, Deva Burns

What do the flowers in our yard and Short-tailed Hawks in the Huachucas have in common? They both tell me the wonderful bounty of surprises in nature, particularly in springtime, particularly after a wet winter. As I was working at the computer on this issue of the Wrendition, a posting on WG05 told of a Short-tailed sighting on the trail near Comfort Springs. Short-taileds are new on the Arizona bird scene, and April 6 must surely be the earliest ever report. This is our first spring in our new house. We have been completely blown away by the wealth of flowers that have bloomed after the winter rains. I can't believe our good fortune in having previous owners who cultivated so much beautiful variety—California Poppies, African and Marguerite Daisies, Calla Lilies, Aril and Bearded Irises—and they never told us. What a wonderful surprise! Now all that's left is to convince someone I know that we

need a water feature in the backyard. Maybe I should surprise him with it.

Laurie's article on the Resolution Copper Company is a must read for all. Arizona's beauty is being threatened by foreign companies promising jobs, always music to legislative ears, and subverting the very processes that have been put in place to preserve that beauty. Herb gives us an interesting lesson on Boyce Thompson, whose Arboretum has preserved a lovely piece of Arizona beauty. The photo quiz previews some returning breeding species. Our rainy winter hasn't just been a boon to our yard and the state's wildflowers. It should make it much easier to see one of Arizona's special bird species as featured in this issue. It's time to get outside and find your own surprises along Arizona's trails.



Ash-throated Flycatcher; photographed by Jim Burns in Papago Park, Phoenix, AZ, March 30, 2005 with Canon EOS 1 body and Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens.

Another Back-door Land Swap Evading U.S. Environmental Laws

Laurie Nessel

from the president

As the Carlota Copper mine coasts towards their final permit, another mine near Superior, Arizona emerges. But this one is different. Carlota Copper Company acquired their permits following federal guidelines required when one wants to mine on federal land. The process has taken over a decade as Carlota and the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) conducted environmental impacts, submitted their permits for federal and public consideration, defended them in court and awaited the results of appeals. As much as we wanted to stop this mine because it could have adverse impacts on Pinto Creek and Haunted Canyon, the diligence of Pinto's advocates and our ability to comment and appeal has created an improved plan.

Conversely, the Resolution Copper Company (RCC), foreign-owned by multinational mining giants RioTinto and BHP, is asking the Arizona congressional delegation to sponsor legislation to swap land and convert the 3025-acre "Oak Flat Campground" parcel inside the Tonto National Forest just east of Superior to private land. This maneuver would allow RCC to evade federal permits and public oversight. RCC plans to mine using the block caving method in which chambers are carved out, resulting in inevitable collapse. The danger of subsidence at Oak Flat, a premier rock climbing locale, is such that the public must be permanently banned from the area.

Although in the midst of a federal mining district, the 760-acre Oak Flat Campground was withdrawn from mineral entry by the Eisenhower Administration because of its superior recreational and environmental values. It was a historic rest stop and campground for early travelers on the trip from Phoenix to Globe. Four species of birds have been found at Oak Flat that are on the National Audubon Society's watch-list of declining species that are of national conservation concern including the Black-chinned Sparrow, Costa's Hummingbird, Lewis's Woodpecker, and Gray Vireo. The area's highly popular and unique attributes for bird study have included the appearance here of the Rufous-backed Robin, Varied Thrush as well as such species as Golden-crowned and White Throated Sparrow, and Slate-colored form of the Dark-eyed Junco.

As private land, RCC would no longer be subject to federal mining law, but rather to Arizona state mining reclamation and air and water pollution laws—among the weakest in the nation. Under federal law, RCC would need to pay for a reclamation bond before mining could commence. Most states require mining companies, not state taxpayers, to pay fees for posting bonds to insure that there will be clean-up of toxic spills during or after the mine

closes. Arizona's bonding requirements are weak and often meaningless. For example, recently the Arizona Republic reported that the State of Arizona (re: you, the taxpayer) is spending \$570,000 to clean up the closed Gibson Mine to remove copper leaching into Pinto Creek a valuable riparian habitat. Ironically, after years of contamination, there is a push to clean up the site to expedite the opening of the Carlota mine.

A land exchange would allow RCC to circumvent the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1970, the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973, the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, and the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

NEPA requires the federal agency involved (the USFS) to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) listing a range of alternatives to a proposed action on federal land, including a No Action alternative. Subsequently, the public may review and comment on the various impacts of the project, including the ore processing, reclamation, and watershed.

The historic Native American cultural and spiritual uses at Oak Flat would no longer have the same protection afforded by NEPA or the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) once privatized. For the Western Apache, Oak Flat is a traditional site with natural springs for gathering acorns and for ceremonial and religious activities. The San Carlos Apache Tribe has expressed their concerns about cultural impacts of the mine to the Tonto National Forest. Incredibly, RCC's bill as presented to Congress exempts RCC from any liability from subsidence of Apache Leap—a major historical Indian massacre site. It would be impossible to replace the ecological or cultural values lost.

Privatizing would also circumvent the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The endangered Arizona Hedgehog Cactus, *Echinocereus triglochidiatus*, var. *arizonicus*, present in this area, would face less protection on private land than on federal land.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) of the U.S. Congress in Sept. 2000 published a study showing the deplorable lack of oversight and protection of the public interest in land exchanges such as this. The report recommends a moratorium on exchanges until the system is reformed. One step toward reform, according to the report, is to allow time for public comment on exchanges. Legislated land exchanges usually come to Congress when proponents know that they could not withstand public scrutiny. Many are swept through legislation without public knowledge or any real examination by

members of Congress who are usually more interested in the jobs created locally. There would be no opportunity for administrative or judicial challenges by citizens under the proposed RCC legislation. Arizona voters have rejected public land exchanges at the ballot box four times in recent years. This is testimony to the publicly perceived inequity in these back room, behind-closed-doors land exchanges.

RCC's legislation does not provide funding for maintenance of the parcels included in the swap. Mitigation properties need continuous fencing and repairs to avoid cattle and ORV trespass. The maintenance assurance costs on riparian properties can easily equal purchase prices.

RCC is claiming to save taxpayer money by hiring the appraisal firm to evaluate the exchange properties they purchased. This clearly puts the fox in the henhouse! To his credit, Bruno Hegner, RCC General Manager, has promised to follow NEPA regulations. Call me a cynic, but if that were the case, why would RCC seek a land swap? His words are meaningless without including such language in the legislation. Why does RCC promise not to impact Apache Leap, yet specifically seek exemption from liability in such an event? How are we to trust RCC to follow the very public process of NEPA when they have avoided even informal meetings with the conservation community until the 11th hour?

You may be confused by various news articles that state Audubon is in support of the land swap. RCC is offering supposedly environmentally sensitive lands the public has not yet seen with the exception of a 1000-acre parcel to be added to National Audubons' Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch in southeast Arizona. MAS, of course, is in favor of preserving sensitive lands. Likewise, we are concerned about getting a fair deal for the public. MAS has experienced resistance after attempts to obtain more information from RCC. It wasn't until after they drafted the legislation for the proposed land swap and sent it to Congress that they agreed to meet with conservationists not involved in selecting parcels for the swap. We are concerned about the ore body's valuation, what mining royalties will be paid to the public, the swap parcels' environmental values and sale prices, water sources, tailings and RCC's equalization payment to the U.S. Treasury. In other words, is this a good deal for the taxpayers? The lands proffered by RCC in this land swap are a pittance to the actual valuation of this multi-billion dollar ore body. Are the traded properties worth the loss of one more link in the chain that is the ineffable beauty of Arizona's natural world?

Notes & Announcements

MAS Board Nominating Committee—Don't forget to come to the May meeting and vote for your Board.

Ralph Griffen—Ralph's wife, Nora, known by everyone as Georgia, kept a notebook of Arivaca bird information for 20 years. Around Christmas time, Georgia lent her notes to someone to copy. She passed away in March and Ralph would sure like the book back. He has no idea who she lent it to, because she has done it numerous times over the years and she never told him who had it. If you have it, please contact a board member or get it back to Ralph as soon as you can.

Membership Information—There are two ways to get on the mailing list in order to receive the *Cactus Wren-dition*. First, by joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in Maricopa County, generally east of 43rd Avenue, when National Audubon receives your check and membership application, Maricopa Audubon will receive your name and address from National, and will add you to Maricopa Audubon's *Wren-dition* mailing list, or you can make a check payable to National Audubon Society for \$20.00 and mail it with your National Audubon Society membership application to: Mike Rupp, Maricopa Audubon Society's membership chair, 740 E. Highland Ave., Suite 100, Phoenix, Arizona, 85014, and he will forward it on to National Audubon. In the latter case, Maricopa Audubon will receive a rebate of your entire \$20.00 National Audubon membership fee the first year. Secondly, by becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and will not receive the Audubon magazine, or any of the "benefits" of National Audubon membership but you will receive one year of the *Cactus Wren-dition*. "Friends" contribution categories in the form of a check made payable to Maricopa Audubon Society, and mailed to Mike Rupp, membership chairman, 740 E. Highland Ave., Suite 100, Phoenix, Arizona 85014. The categories are—Anna's-\$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. All "Friends" members receive various 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" of Maricopa Audubon Society.

Tucson Audubon Society and all other Arizona Audubon Chapters—Alaska Birding from Denali to the Sea—June 11-21, 2005—With John Higgins and Rochelle Gerratt

For more information about this trip and to register, contact Rochelle Gerratt at 520-696-2002 or info@naturetreks.net.

Join us on a tour of some of Alaska's prime birding spots: Anchorage, Denali National Park, Denali Highway, and the Kenai Peninsula including Seward and Homer. We expect to see a number of bird species and hopefully all of the Big 5—large mammals that Alaska is famous for - grizzlies, caribou, Dall sheep, moose, and wolves. June is a great month to view Alaska's returning and breeding birds. With a little luck we should be early enough to miss out on the hordes of mosquitoes this state is famous for, and just in time for early summer flowers.

The trip price is \$3600 based on double occupancy. This includes all ground transportation by van from Anchorage, in-state air flight, boat rides, all meals, accommodations, and entrance fees, and two guides. \$150 of the total trip price per person will be donated to the local Arizona Audubon chapter they belong to. Membership in an Arizona Audubon Society is required, either your local one or with Tucson Audubon Society. For more information and to register, contact Rochelle Gerratt at 520-696-2002 or at info@naturetreks.net or visit <http://www.naturetreks.net/>.

Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas:

Volunteers are needed for the second PA Breeding Bird Atlas Project scheduled for 2004-2008. This atlas effort comes two decades after the first atlas which documented 187 breeding species in the Commonwealth. The sponsors include the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, Powdermill Nature Reserve, Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology and Pennsylvania Game Commission. To learn more or register to participate go to www.pabirdatlas.org.

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. I think Audubon should offer something like this!

The Dove-tail 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 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.

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

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

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts—For information, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or mail to: laurienessel@hotmail.com

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your **submissions** to the Editor—Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those to me directly. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.



A) good photo, difficult bird



C) good photo, difficult bird



B) good photo, difficult bird

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE—

We had so much fun in last issue's quiz, I thought we should stay in the same family. And once again all three birds are in the same genus, all summertime residents in Arizona.

All photos by Jim Burns.

Who Was Boyce Thompson?

Herb Fibel

... and why did they name the Arboretum after him?

He was actually *William Boyce Thompson*, born in Alder Gulch, a suburb, (and I use the term loosely,) of Virginia City, Montana, on May 13, 1869, to Ann Boyce and William Thompson. By the time young William was born, the gold, which had lured thousands to that area, had played out, but William's father (also William) earned his livelihood doing woodworking and carpentry for others, and operated building material and lumber supply houses in Virginia City and at various other locations over the years.

Young William was fascinated by minerals, and had his own collection when he was four. At an early age he earned money by collecting tin cans, melting them down, and collecting the lead, which he formed into

"He developed a reputation of trustworthiness, and never profited at the cost of a friend's loss."

bars and sold to the local hardware store. When he was ten, William moved with his family, briefly to Glendale, and then on to Butte, a raw mining town in those days, and far less sophisticated than his Virginia City home of his early years. In the small yard of his new home Will planted flowers and tended them for his mother, an odd avocation for such a robust young man.

Two years after the Thompsons moved to Butte, a huge copper vein was discovered under the town, and a boom followed. At the age of fifteen, William gained a significant reputation as a gambler in the town's beer halls. He attended the local public schools without "notable results". In January 1887 his father managed, nevertheless, to gain admission for William to the prestigious Exeter Academy, a highly regarded prep school, in New Hampshire. Most graduates of Exeter went on to Harvard, but "Tommy" as he was known at Exeter, after three years had sufficient credits to be able to pursue his main interests, mining and metallurgical engineering, at the Columbia University School of Mines in New York. In the summer after his first year he found a promising vein of silver in an area near his home. By the time it played out, the new school year had already begun. He decided that it was not the mining engineer who made the big money in mining, but,

rather, the person who bought and sold investments in mines. He never went back to college. Instead, W.B. accepted a temporary position as superintendent of a mine near Butte, until the owner returned the following summer. The owner died, and young William stayed on. When silver prices dropped below the level where mining was profitable, that mine had to be abandoned, as well.

Thompson drifted from one job to another, some involved selling lumber for one of his father's lumber mills, and some involved mining. He moved to Helena, and in February 1895, William married Gertrude Hickman, stealing her from under the nose of a rival. In 1897, Gertrude bore him a daughter, who was destined to be their only child.

Ultimately young Thompson moved his little family to New York City and went into business for himself, buying and selling stock in promising mining operations. He had a good eye for what would turn out to be a successful mining venture. He traded stocks on the "curb", which was called that, because men like him were buying and selling shares just outside the stolid stock exchanges, where trading was done only by licensed brokers. Thompson either personally investigated prospective mining ventures, or sent out trusted and knowledgeable advisors to be his eyes and ears. Mining stocks were risky investments those days. When the ventures were successful, there were big returns, but when the finds turned out to be false alarms, huge fortunes could be wiped out in the wink of an eye. Economics and politics played large roles in the success or failure of mining ventures, since rising and falling prices of particular minerals in the world markets determined whether or not those minerals could be profitably extracted with the use of the then available technology. It was an industry where huge investments in equipment had to be made before the first sales dollar could be brought in.

Thompson had a knack for knowing when to get into and when to get out of a particular investment, and many people came to trust his judgment. He developed a reputation of trustworthiness, and never profited at the cost of a friend's loss. His work sent him all over the world to examine mining and mineral extraction prospects. At one point it was estimated that he was worth fifty million dollars, a fortune probably comparable to that of a billionaire today. He built a huge home in Yonkers, fronting the Hudson, and called his estate "Alder", after his birthplace, Alder Gulch, Montana, and spent much money, time and energy developing the grounds into a horticultural showplace.

During World War I officials high in the U.S. government sent Thompson to Petrograd, Russia, ostensibly as the head of a Red Cross mission, bestowing upon him the rank of colonel. The Czar and royalty had been ousted, and the political situation was highly unstable. Thompson's real mission was to advise our administration on the best ways to keep the Russians fighting the Germans on the eastern front, so the Germans wouldn't be able to neutralize the situation there, and divert their military forces that were tied up in the east back to the West to take on the allied forces of the U.S., France, and Great Britain. Although Thompson managed to correctly analyze which faction would take control in the Soviet Union, his strong counsel to that effect was never heeded by the U.S. President.

In later years Thompson played a major role in the development of the Magma copper mine near Globe, and the Inspiration copper mine near Superior. He fell in love with the Picket Post Mountain and the land around it, and had the Picket Post House built at the base of it, where the front of the house provided a panoramic view of the mountain, and of the valley below, where the Queen Creek flowed. Through various land swaps with the U.S. Forest Service, he acquired the 30 acres, which is today the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum. He not only acquired the land, but he was instrumental in importing desert growing plants from the deserts throughout the world to the Arboretum.

The Arboretum, from 1929 to 1965, was operated exclusively by the non-profit Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum Corporation. From 1965 to 1977, it was operated jointly by that corporation and the U of A, and since 1977 it has been managed cooperatively by those two organizations and the State Parks Board.

Before his death in 1930, in 1924, Thompson also founded and endowed the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research, located just across the road from his estate in Yonkers, New York. That institute, through science and chemistry, is dedicated to helping feed, clothe, and house the people of the world. In addition, Thompson contributed millions of dollars to his alma mater, Exeter Academy.

William Boyce Thompson was a man who lived life to the fullest, and who made an enduring contribution to the preservation of beauty and to the physical well being of our planet.

Source: "The Magnate" by Hermann Hagedorn

AZ's Special Species Blue-Throated Hummingbird

Jim Burns

Identify the two silhouetted species in the accompanying photograph and tell me which one is getting nervous. That's *Lampornis clemenciae* on the right, one of Arizona's special species, species found only here or more easily here than in any other state. On the left, perched in the snag, is a nervous Northern Pygmy-Owl. Part of the reason Blue-throated Hummingbird is special is because it is the largest hummingbird north of the Mexican border. Blue-throats are actually larger than some of our sparrows, three times the weight of a Ruby-throat, very territorial, and extremely aggressive. If you deleted the length of this owl's tail, guess which of these two combatants would be bigger. I'd be nervous too!

Blue-throats have become increasingly difficult to find these past few summers, even to the point that when and where are being noted on the state hotline. There is a one word answer: drought. Sheri Williamson says this species' "ecological needs are among the most specialized of any North American hummingbird." Blue-throats require nesting sites near or directly over running water with overhanging shelter from sun and rain. The nests consist of plant down thatched with spider silk and camouflaged with green moss rather than lichen which most hummers prefer. Placement may be in an undercut stream bank, on branches under overhanging limbs, or beneath bridges and the eaves of buildings. Nests are typically reused in the

same season and for multiple years thereafter.

Blue-throats are found wherever Magnificent Hummingbirds are found but, even in wet years, not in the same numbers as the latter. From April through September look in any of the lower, shaded canyons



Photo by Jim Burns

of southern Arizona's "Sky Island" mountains ranges, particularly the South Fork of Cave Creek on the east side of the Chiricahuas, Ash, Miller, Carr, and Ramsey Canyon in the Huachucas, and Madera Canyon in the Santa Catalinas. As with other Arizona hummers, each year brings a few more reports of birds overwintering near feeding stations, and the Blue-throat's size and mountain habitat makes it more tolerant of cold than other members of the family.

South of the border, Blue-throats are resident in pine-oak from Nuevo Leon south, but typically withdraw in

winter from the northernmost parts of its Mexican range. In addition to southern Arizona, breeding occurs locally in southern New Mexico and southwest Texas, and in wet cycles summering Blue-throats can be found in our state as far north as the Mogollon Rim. Indeed, our first ever Blue-throat sighting was at the Tonto Natural Bridge north of Payson in June, and we also have records from Oak Creek Canyon, the top of Mt Lemmon, and Big Bend National Park.

Consistent with their size and personality, Blue-throats are notoriously vocal, and if you are on a Blue-throat territory, you will probably hear the male before you see the bird or find a nest. Males "sing" loudly and often incessantly from shaded perches below the canopy and the high, shrill "seep" song is clearly audible above all but the loudest stream noise. Blue throats also call as they forage, defending creekside flower beds or flycatching insects as large as beetles and wasps.

The genus name, *Lampornis*, comes to us from the Greek word for lamp or torch, but of course the sun must catch the gorget just right or the namesake color will not be evident. Imagine relaxing at a streamside campsite and feeling a strange weight on the bottom of your cup just as the rim touches your lips and you begin to drink. As your eyes focus down the barrel of the cup, there is a five inch bird, sunlit incandescent blue throat five inches from your nose. This occurred to me on May 26, 1991 (when camping along the South Fork of Cave Creek in the Chiricahuas was still legal) hours after the dust-up in the photo took place. The Blue-throat was probably celebrating another territorial defense, the owl hunkered down in dense foliage far from any exposed hunting perch. And yes, unnerved, I spilled the drink all over myself as the Blue-throat zipped away.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Marjorie Eckman

The following field trips are sponsored by the Maricopa Audubon Society who have an organized program of trips throughout the year. They are open to the public and are free and include all skill levels. All the trips are Difficulty Level 1 unless noted otherwise.

CAR POOLING:

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

LEGEND:

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 distances, considerable birding from vehicle and possibly multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails.

REMINDERS:

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

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

April-June 2005

Saturday, April 16 - Spur Cross

We will concentrate on a portion of the park recently reopened to visitors. We will also visit an area known as "Jewel of the Creek" which features a stand of cottonwoods, willow and ash. Passerines should be abundant in this riparian area. Last year a total of 44 species saw a wide variety of birds plus a western diamondback, coyote and several mule deer. Three mile walk. Bring a lunch. Call leader for meeting place and reservations.

Co-leaders: Laurie Nessel and John Gunn,

wildlife biologist and park ranger.
Call 480-968-5614 or
laurienessel@hotmail.com

Wednesday, April 20 - Butterflies and Birds at Sunflower

A quiet road along Sycamore Creek should provide some early migrant birds and a nice variety of butterflies. Bring lunch and water. Contact leader for additional information and reservations. Limit 12 Difficulty 1
Leader: Janet Witzeman at 602-840-6089, no emails please.

Wednesday, April 27 - Mt. Ord

We will visit beautiful grassland, pinyon-juniper, and ponderosa pine habitats in the Upper and Lower Sonoran life zones. Mt. Ord is the highest bird habitat in Maricopa County. We may hope to encounter Rufous-crowned Sparrow, Scott's Oriole, Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow, and many warblers including Olive, Painted Redstart, Grace's, Black-throated Gray and Virginia's as well as Summer and Hepatic Tanagers, nuthatches and other passerine species. Bring a lunch. The road is rocky and high-clearance vehicles are required. We can carpool as necessary. Call leader for additional information and reservations. Difficulty 2

Leader: Bob Witzeman at 602-840-0052. No emails please.

Saturday & Sunday, April 30-May 1 for a Sierra Ancha camping trip (MAS & SAS)

This weekend car camping trip is scheduled for the peak period for spring migration of birds in Gila County, so you never know what we might encounter. We will visit many habitats and elevations in search of a great diversity of birds. This includes waterbirds at Roosevelt Lake and birds of the desert, riparian woodlands, and cool mountain forests. Since this is an overnight camping trip, we may also try our luck with detecting nocturnal owls and nightjars. This field trip may include some strenuous mountain trail hiking and higher clearance vehicles may be needed in a few areas. Please note this is a joint trip with Sonoran Audubon and space is limited to only 15 participants. Carpooling is required.

Leader: Troy Corman at 602-482-6187 or aplomado@cox.net for reservations and additional information.

Friday, May 6 - Box Canyon (joint trip MAS & SAS)

Box Canyon is a high-walled canyon of the Hassayampa River located about 12 miles northeast of Wickenburg. Due to the drought there has been little or no water in recent years, but if the current rains continue, then by May we may have to walk through some water. Wear old tennis shoes and bring a change of shoes and socks to leave in the vehicles. Also bring a backpack with lunch and water. We should be back in Wickenburg by 2 PM. On the drive to the Canyon we will see the usual resident desert birds, but in the Canyon we can expect to see riparian birds, residents and migrants. We will surely hear calling Canyon Wrens. The likely birds at the Box are the same as at the Hassayampa River Preserve, if we have a rainy fall/winter. Meet at 8 AM at the Wickenburg Community Center: as you travel northwest on Hwy #60 entering Wickenburg you will cross the bridge over the Hassayampa, turn right immediately after the bridge and you will be looking at a large white building and surrounding parking lot. Difficulty 2

Leader: Nancy London at 928-684-5530 or 55407@w3az.net . Maricopa members for convenience may contact Marjorie Eckman at 480-368-1901 or desertjewelB77@aol.com

Wednesday, May 11 - Rackensack, Lower Camp Creek, Seven Springs

This is one of the best places in the county for migrating warblers and resident species. Bring lunch and water. Call for information and reservations. Limit 12 Difficulty 1
Leaders: Janet Witzeman and Bix Demaree. Call Janet at 602-840-6089, no emails please.

Wednesday, May 18 - Phoenix Zoo Ponds

The Phoenix Zoo's ponds are home to incredible numbers of migratory waterfowl and this is a great chance for beginning birders to practice their identification. Seasoned birders will enjoy the sheer volume of migrants and the visibility of some usually difficult-to-view birds. This trip will include stops at the Arizona Aviary, three major lakes and the Harris Hawk demonstration. We will begin at 8 AM, one hour before the park opens to the public and conclude at noon. Program is free to Zoo members and a \$4 donation is

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

requested for non-zoo members. Limit 30
Leader: Mike Foley at 602-273-1341 extension 7339 or email mfoley@thephxzoo.com for reservations.

Saturday, May 21 Oak Flat Campground - Haunted Canyon, endangered Tonto National Forest Public Lands

Early morning stop to Oak Flat Campground for a quick view of the 4100-foot elevation chaparral habitat. Continue on to Haunted Canyon for a three-mile round trip hike to a 95% forest canopy including One-seed juniper and Arizona alder. We hope to see some spring migrants at this 3500 foot elevation riparian habitat. Bring lunch and water. Call for reservation and any additional information. Difficulty 3

Leader: Laurie Nessel at laurienessel@hotmail.com or 480-968-5614

Saturday, June 4 - Hassayampa River Preserve & US #60 Rest Area

We will meet at the US #60 rest area, which is about 2 miles south of the Preserve at 7 AM. After birding around this area for about an hour we will then drive up to the Preserve, where we will spend the remainder of the morning. The spring migration will have largely ended, and we will be seeking the nesting bird species, as well as any other creatures we happen to find. Some of our target species will include: Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Tropical and Thick-billed Kingbirds, Willow Flycatcher, Summer Tanager, Blue Grosbeak and possibly find nesting Lawrence's Goldfinches recently reported. The Preserve also hosts a wide variety of reptiles, including the rare Gilbert's Skink, a substantial number of butterflies, and an excellent selection of odonates, as well as many other interesting insects. Participants should wear comfortable walking shoes and bring plenty of water. Bring a lunch for the Preserve's picnic area. Difficulty 1

Leaders: Cynthia Donald and Pete Moulton. Please call Cynthia at planres@earthlink.net or 480-768-0593

Saturday & Sunday, June 11-12 - Weekend in Mogollon Rim area near Payson

We have been invited by our generous member, Mel Bramley and Ann to spend

the weekend at their summer home just under the Mogollon Rim near Payson. Saturday, we will meet at Denny's on Shea Blvd just west of Beeline Hwy (#87) and carpool to the Tonto Fish Hatchery with a few stops on the way "home". Sunday may include a walk along the creek by their house (many feeders) and afterwards bird the Tonto Natural Bridge. Bring a sleeping bag plus your cereal for breakfast and a lunch sandwich and one dish assigned by our host for Saturday night.

Leader: Mel Bramley. Please call for reservations and details at 480-969-9893 (home evenings) OR 480-993-7913 (cell) OR 480-834-0528 (Ann day) OR email: bramleya@att.net and leave telephone number if call or email.

Saturday, June 18 - Mt. Ord

Join us for a leisurely trip to Mt Ord for summering Warblers, Vireos, and Flycatchers. En route we will stop in Sunflower and bird along Sycamore Creek watching for Common Black Hawk and Zone-tailed Hawk. At Mt Ord, our target birds will be Gray Vireo, Black-chinned Sparrow, Painted Redstart, Red-faced Warbler (rare here) and Olive Warbler. Please bring a scope if available, lunch, snacks, and lots of water. We will meet at Fountain Hills Lake at 6 AM in the southside parking lot along Panorama Drive. Limit 10 Difficulty 1

Leader Kurt Rademaker at 480-837-2446 or kurtrad@mexicobirding.com

Saturday, June 25 - Flagstaff Specialties

Enjoy a day of birding in the shadow of Arizona's tallest peaks as we visit Little Spring and other exciting locations north of Flagstaff. We will search for Three-toed Woodpecker, Gray Flycatcher Pinyon Jay, Clark's Nutcracker and other coniferous and pinyon juniper species. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the Museum of Northern Arizona located north of Flagstaff on US #180. Bring a lunch. Difficulty: 3 (fairly easy hike under high altitude conditions). Call leader in advance for reservations, information and any changes. **Leader: Charles Babbitt** at 602-840-1772 or cjbabbitt@cox.net

Gilbert Water Ranch Beginning Birdwalks

Maricopa Audubon Society, the oldest and largest Audubon chapter in the valley,

has teamed with The Riparian Institute of Gilbert, to bring regular monthly "birdwalks" to individuals and families in the southeast valley.

Located at the southeast corner of Greenfield and Guadalupe Roads, the beautiful 110 acre Gilbert Water Ranch will play host to guided birdwalks each second Saturday of the month, from October 2004 through April 2005. Running from 8AM to 12:00, the birdwalks will be guided by experienced leaders, with "loaner" binoculars and field guide books available free of charge. Each walk will travel around several of the ponds and a variety of habitats that will provide participants with good views of some of the 125 species that have been recorded at the water recharge facility.

In addition, there will be spotting scopes set up at various spots to see close-ups of waterfowl, and changing educational displays and learning opportunities at the exhibit tent. Come see bird artifacts, children's books on birds, stunning bird photographs, and even live birds like a Bald Eagle or Red-tailed Hawk, brought by Liberty Wildlife, a local wildlife rehabilitator.

The walks are open to all ages, individuals, and families, and are especially suited to let children experience, perhaps for the first time, the little known bird species that live right in our own neighborhoods- from beautiful Red-Tailed Hawks, and ground-dwelling Burrowing Owls that stand guard at their burrow entrances, to a good variety of ducks, sparrows, and sandpipers.

Details about birdwalk dates, times, and changing exhibits can be seen at: www.maricopaaudubon.org, and www.riparianinstitute.org

These birdwalks are a perfect way to introduce children and adults alike to local birdlife, and provide an educational family activity that will be long-remembered. Maricopa Audubon invites you and your little "naturalists" out for a fun morning of discovery and exploration.



Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

When Chris Benesh, professional birding guide based in Tucson, recently posted a note on the internet regarding a mystery *empidonax* flycatcher near Patagonia, it jogged my memory back to a Photo Quiz Chris had done in the April, 2000 issue of *Birding*. My initial interest in bird photography was in getting images which would show the finer points of identification, and I remembered checking my files to see if any of my flycatcher slides captured the diagnostic features which Chris elucidated in his 2000 article. In this quiz, I'll let you can be the judge.

We know these flycatchers are all in the same genus. We can eliminate *contopus* (we did them last issue), *empidonax* (smaller, with eyerings and wingbars), *sayornis* (even without color we can see the schemes of light and dark plumage don't match up), and *myiarchus* (crested head profiles, more vertical perching postures, and thinner bills). These are the robust-bodied, bull-necked members of the flycatcher family that harass hawks and prefer high, exposed perches. These are *tyrannus*, the kingbirds, and there are only four of the kingbirds that qualify as summer residents of our state. Even in full color, though, it is often difficult to separate Western, Cassin's, Tropical, and Thick-billed, trying to evaluate things like contrast between cheeks and throat, wings and tail, and the extent of yellow on the belly. In his quiz Chris took us beyond color to considerations of shape and structure.

A)–Good photo, difficult bird

Thick-billed is the only one of our four kingbird possibilities aptly named for a physical feature. Our first quiz bird does not have the nominate huge bill diagnostic for that species, and it also lacks the dark-headed appearance of that species. As a matter of fact, none of our three quiz birds show the thick bill and black cap that are so obvious on Thick-billed, so let's eliminate Thick-billed from consideration on all three.

In comparing our first bird with the other two, there are four things which stand out: the lack of sharp contrast between the gray of the head and the white of the cheek and throat (compare to our third bird); the contrast of the dark tail, which appears black in this photo, with the rest of the upperparts (compare to our second bird); the relative length of the wings and tail (compare to both other birds); and the shape of the outer primaries (compare especially to the second bird).

Plumage considerations such as the lack of contrast between head and throat and the very dark tail should lead us to Western Kingbird. Structurally, Western Kingbirds are relatively short-tailed and long-winged, a feature corroborated by this first photo and apparent also in the second, but certainly not in the third which depicts, by contrast, a very long-tailed, short-winged bird. The structural characteristic shown in our first image which clinches the identification as a Western Kingbird is the shape of the outer primaries which taper to long scimitar-like points. To quote Chris's *Birding* article, "None of the other yellow-bellied kingbirds develop such modified primary tips." This Western Kingbird was photographed in Kansas at Quivira National Wildlife Refuge, April, 1996.

When a professional birder does a guide book illuminating a single family of birds, it typically goes well beyond the popular guide books and is well worth the price of admission. None of the current field guides I checked mention this outstanding structural field mark for Western Kingbird, and if I was able to capture it in a random photograph, it seems it shouldn't be too hard to observe in the field with binoculars or scope views. With this in mind, let's tackle our remaining two problems.

B)–Good photo, difficult bird

The difficulty with comparing this image to that of our known Western Kingbird is that this bird has not turned its head toward the camera quite as far as the Western. It appears darker overall and perhaps chunkier, and the small white patch on the cheek seems to indicate a sharper contrast to the overall head color in comparison to our Western, whereas tail contrast appears less. These differences could be just the vagaries of light and camera angle, but might lead us initially to consider Cassin's Kingbird first.

There are two structural clues here which should corroborate what our first impressions about plumage seem to be telling us. Our second bird is, like Western, relatively short-tailed and long-winged. Maybe it's just another Western. But check out those tips on the outer primaries. They are quite distinctive and they are quite distinctive from those of our first quiz bird. Chris describes the pattern seen here as much more strongly notched than the outer primaries of Tropical and notched less extensively and much closer to the tip than Western—a distinctive and identifying field mark of Cassin's Kingbird not mentioned in any of the popular field guides.

If a view of the primaries on your suspected Cassin's is not possible, look for the thin buffy tail tips which also show up in this image. Remember that Western Kingbirds show distinctive white outer tail feathers, but these can be absent at certain times during molting. As mentioned earlier, Cassin's Kingbirds are perhaps best known for the sharp contrast of dark blue-gray head and chest with white chin, but on a bird with its back to the observer, such as we have here, this plumage feature is of little use. Once again, Chris has taken us beyond the field guides. This Cassin's Kingbird was photographed at Kino Springs, Arizona in May, 2000. I was delighted to have had this propitious opportunity right after Chris's article came out.

C)–Good photo, difficult bird

I know you're thinking, by process of elimination, this has to be a Tropical Kingbird, but we need to go through the drill. In regard to plumage, this third bird appears closer to our Western than our Cassin's. It is lighter overall than Cassin's and lacks Cassin's sharp contrast between head, chin, and underparts.

This third image shows us two good structural features which should eliminate Cassin's as well as Western. Though the angle doesn't give a true profile, the bill here appears longer than those of our first two birds—a good field mark for Tropical, particularly in comparison to Western which it can closely resemble in plumage. Additionally, this image depicts a bird that is obviously short-winged and long-tailed—not the jizz you would ever get from Tropical's two congeners.

Wait a minute! Slow down! Why couldn't this be a Couch's? Well, because Couch's is a Rio Grande Valley in Texas breeder you say. Yes, but there have been fall Couch's wanderers recorded in New Mexico and California, and a Tropical seen and heard at the Gilbert Riparian Area in the fall of '03 raised valid suspicions. In truth, without hearing this bird vocalize, it is impossible to eliminate the possibility of Couch's, inseparable from Tropical in the field by plumage and structure. In fact, this is a Couch's Kingbird, photographed in Kenedy County, Texas in March, 2002.

Chris, thanks for your keen and experienced insights on the *tyrannus* flycatchers and, for God's sake, please finish your book soon and get us beyond the field guides for the whole family. I want to be able to separate the *myiarchus* flycatchers before I die.

Saturday & Sunday, December 11-12 - Salton Sea led by Russ Widner

Russ Widner led this well planned two-day trip to a wonderful area that gave us exposure to many new species. We started at the Wister Unit and then proceeded to the Red Hill Marina, Obsidian Butte, Salton Sea NWR and worked around the west side to the north shore, stopping often. We had more than a few accomplished birders with us but a standout visiting birder, Cheri Orwig from NM amazed everyone with her quick spotting. Many waterfowl were seen, Eared Grebes everywhere but also many species not easily seen in Arizona including Reddish Egret, Black-bellied Plover, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Marbled Godwit, Western Sandpiper, Dunlin, Caspian Tern, several gull species including our target bird, the Yellow-footed Gull. The White-tailed Kite and Ring-necked Pheasant were also new to many of the participants who, on the whole, saw many new life birds. December is a good time to visit this area. Thanks to Russ for his thorough planning. Marjorie Eckman

Saturday, January 15 - McCormick Ranch and Pavilions Ponds led by Harvey Beatty

Ten birders met at 7 AM at Chart House Restaurant on a chilly but calm morning that would soon warm up nicely. Hundreds of birds could be seen in the early morning light - American Wigeons, Common Mergansers, Canvasbacks, Ruddy Ducks, Green-winged Teal, Mallards, Canada Geese, American Coots, and Double-crested Cormorants. Other birds seen from or at the restaurant were Great Blue Heron, Spotted Sandpiper, American Pipit, Black Phoebe, White-crowned Sparrow and Great-tailed Grackle. We then checked the smaller pond on the north side of the Parkway where we found Northern Shovelers and a Great Egret. A Red-tailed Hawk sat high in a Eucalyptus tree, and two Snow Geese accompanying Canada Geese flew overhead. A Belted Kingfisher rattled as he surveyed the pond.

We moved to another vantage point farther east near the McCormick Ranch golf course clubhouse and found a Eurasian Wigeon. He swam close by in good light. We were very pleased, as it was a life bird for most of the group.

The next stop was the Pavilions Shopping center at Pima and Indian Bend. On the north pond, we spotted Hooded Mergansers, Ring-necked Ducks, Gadwalls, Pied-billed Grebes, and Black-necked Stilts. We then headed for the palm trees between the Petco store and Hi-Health where the Lewis's Woodpecker had been seen on previous visits. We spotted him immediately. As we left by car to check the south pond, we spotted a second Lewis's Woodpecker. At the south pond we found a second Eurasian Wigeon and got our best look at a Lewis's Woodpecker. This was also a life bird for some members of our group.

We then proceeded to the shopping center parking lot on the west side of Hayden Road at Royal Palm Road (north of Via de Ventura). A large pond is located north of this shopping center. Here we found an Eared Grebe, Black-crowned Night Heron (almost always present in the pine or cottonwood trees), Northern Rough-winged Swallow (at rest), and to our amazement, an adult Bald Eagle sitting in a cottonwood tree that was only about ten yards from where we were standing.

A total of fifty species were seen. Somewhere along the way to seeing Eurasian Wigeon twice, Lewis's Woodpecker three times, and an unexpected Bald Eagle at arms length, so to speak, one member of the group attributed "The Midas Touch" to the leader. He was kidding, of course. Harvey Beatty

Saturday, January 22 - Arlington and Gila River Areas led by Mike Rupp

A large group of 22 enthusiastic birdwatchers made the trip to the Arlington hoping to see some Sandhill Cranes, but despite missing this wintering species, 70 others were counted during the all-day trip. The highlight may have been two Great Horned Owls that were seen behind the church in Palo Verde, in the tamarisk trees edging the cemetery. Good close-up looks were had by all of the Owls glaring down at us for disturbing their sleep. The rare White Ibis that has been wintering in the area around Lower River Road Ponds was seen at a distance by some, and the trees next to the church yielded a Merlin, the second one seen on this trip. Seven sparrow

species were noted - the best being many Sage Sparrows at the "Thrasher Site" on Baseline Rd and the hawk/accipiter species seen were Harris's, Sharp-skinned, Red-tailed, American Kestrels, Northern Harriers, Ferruginous (2), and a Prairie Falcon. Among the "usual" water birds we found a Dunlin at the Lower River Road ponds. The area was new ground for many of the participants and there were likewise many new birds seen for the first time by several folks. We will visit this area again sometime in 2005 - watch for it in the field trip schedule! Mike Rupp

Saturday & Sunday, January 25-26 - Patagonia State Park and other Areas

This trip started on the Friday before when different groups had different objectives. Marny Dabbs and Ann Pearce arrived at the Park several days before the rest of us and got excellent views of the Eared Trogon. Ken Linker birded the Sweetwater Wetlands in Tucson and got his target bird, the Least Grebe. Joy Dingley, Cheri Orwig, Barbara Meding and myself stopped first at Red Rock and got long close-up views of the Ruddy Ground Doves, then to the Santa Cruz River at the Ina Road Bridge where considerable effort went into finding the LeConte's Sparrow. The result was a bit frustrating as we spread out resulting in two of us getting a textbook view and the other two missing it. A scramble over to the area where it flew was unsuccessful. Our third stop was at Continental where we dipped on the Harris's Sparrow. Then on to Madera Canyon where many interesting birds were seen - long looks at Yellow-eyed Juncos, Arizona Woodpecker, Magnificent Hummingbird and a Coatimundi leisurely strolling along the road bank! We stayed at Motel 6 in Nogales and the next day joined Ron Hummel, park naturalist for a pontoon boat ride on the lake - totally lovely. Our guide, Matt Brown then took us on a hunt for our three target species - Black-capped Gnatcatcher, Eared Trogon and the Louisiana Waterthrush, none of which were found. It was a rather frustrating experience but we followed it with a brief stops at Paton's and the Empire Cienega. A total of 77 species were seen but I personally left with

continued on page 12

Field Trip Reports

Continued from page 11

lingering concerns about the latter part of the trip.

Saturday, January 29 - Agua Fria National Monument led by Karen Stucke

We carpoled from Phoenix to Cordes Junction where we met a few more birdwatchers for a total of 13. Our first stop was a house on the east side of town which had several feeders. We picked up Lark Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Curved-bill Thrasher, Eurasian Collared Dove, Common Raven, Northern Mockingbird, Western Scrub Jay, White-crowned Sparrow, House Sparrow, House Finch and Mourning Dove. Our next stop was at the confluence of Sycamore and Ash Creeks, the headwaters of the Agua Fria River, where there is a working ranch. The water level appeared normal for this perennial stream, although there was evidence of debris high in the willows from heavy rains in January. Along the road and at the ranch and stream we spotted Black Phoebe, Vermilion Flycatcher, American Pipit, Rock Wren, Bewick's Wren, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Plumbeous Vireo, Verdin, Dark-eyed Junco, Lesser Goldfinch, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Red-winged Blackbird, and Gila Woodpecker.

Our third stop for the day was a few miles further south on the Agua Fria

River at a private ranch. This did not prove to be as birdy as in prior years, but we had a close encounter with a Red-naped Sapsucker, and very good looks at Ladder-backed Woodpeckers and Say's Phoebes. Due to a washed out river crossing, we decided not to visit the Perry Mesa grasslands. Everyone enjoyed the scenery as well as the birds on this high semi-desert plateau. There are many other areas that could be explored in future trips to this interesting area.

Karen Stucke

Wednesday, February 2 - LeConte's Thrasher Site led by Jim Burns

Jim Burns led this very successful trip guiding a fairly large group of birders with such ease that we saw four LeConte's Thrashers (two pairs), a Sage Thrasher (both species gave us long looks) and on the roadside nearby, two Bendire's Thrasher's along with the usual Sage and Black-throated Sparrows in a short time. This is a trip where it sometimes seems like lengthy searching yields nothing much except disappointment but it struck me that besides seeing many of the common desert birds, we certainly saw these target birds effortlessly, which many commented was due to Jim's expert leadership. Quite a few participants got life birds, some as many as three.

Marjorie Eckman

Saturday & Sunday, February 26-27 Cibola NWR to Topock led by Troy Corman

Tracy McCarthy and I led a Maricopa Audubon trip to an area new to many of the participants. We found the floodwaters of the Bill Williams River had muddied the Colorado River from their confluence down past Cibola NWR. On Saturday at Cibola we were told that the wintering geese had left the refuge several weeks prior, however we did observe 5 Greater White-fronted and 2 Snow Geese, among approximately 200 Sandhill Cranes. The rarest bird of the trip was actually found in California, just north of the small town of Ripley. It was a Cassin's Kingbird. In the reference "Birds of the Lower Colorado River Valley" by Rosenberg et al (1991), there were no winter records for this kingbird for the Valley. There was a fair variety of ducks on the river adjacent to the Parker Oasis and a few of us watched as a pair of Eurasian Collared-Doves flew across the river to CA. The muddy waters below Parker Dam held some Common Goldeneyes. Buffleheads, and a small flock of Lesser Scaup, but there were no Barrow's Goldeneyes to be found. Again due to the muddy waters in the Bill Williams Arm of Lake Havasu, the

continued on page 15

Carefree Christmas Bird Count Summary, January 3, 2005

Walter Thurber (compiler)

The 13th annual Carefree Christmas Bird Count was held on Monday, January 3, 2005. Some 71 field observers and 14 feeder watchers teamed up to find 95 species and 10,310 individual birds. Our species and individual bird totals were below average, due largely to rainy weather and localized flooding that hampered our efforts.

New species for the count were a Northern Pintail at the Rancho Manana golf course and a Rough-legged Hawk in the Desert Mountain area. This brings our cumulative total to 153 species. Long-eared Owls appeared for the fourth

time on the count. The Dusky Flycatcher found during count week was another noteworthy find. Peach-faced Lovebirds, however, were absent for the fourth consecutive year.

Record high counts were established for Canada Goose, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Lesser Scaup and European Starling. We equaled the record for Prairie Falcon, Vermilion Flycatcher and Red-breasted Nuthatch. White-crowned Sparrow was our most abundant bird. Last year Carefree had the national high count for Gambel's Quail, Gilded Flicker, Cactus Wren, Rock Wren,

Bendire's Thrasher, Curve-billed Thrasher, Phainopepla and Black-throated Sparrow.

Our area leaders were Harvey Beatty, Diane Berney, Ed Burnett, Greg Clark, Troy Corman, Tara Deck, Cynthia Donald, Herb Fibel and Daniela Yellan. Joining us from the Audubon Arizona office were Sam Campana, Executive Director and Tice Supplee, Director of Bird Conservation. Harvey Beatty, Troy Corman, Bix Demaree and Russ Widner marked their tenth consecutive year on this count. Thanks to everyone who participated or otherwise supported us this year.

DECEMBER, JANUARY, & FEBRUARY 2005

A Common Loon, an uncommon winter visitor, was observed in southwest Phoenix Dec. 16 (fide TC). Small numbers of Am. White Pelicans wintered at Gillespie Dam and at 115th Ave. and the Gila River (PD,TC). In mid-January, numbers increased at the lakes in the Chandler area to almost 100 (RD,TC). An adult Brown Pelican (rare in winter) was observed in Avondale Jan. 1 & 2 (JT). Neotropic Cormorants were found nesting for the second year at a gated community in Chandler Feb. 5 (TC). Several hundred each of Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants were counted in lakes and ponds in Chandler Feb. 5 (TC). Numbers of Neotropic Cormorants were recorded on the Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count Dec. 16 and on the Gila River CBC Dec. 28 (fide TC). Between 12 and 29 were observed at the Gilbert Neely Ranch Wildlife Area Feb. 26-27 (JMc,RHu).

An Am. Bittern (a rare winter visitor) was discovered near 115th Ave. and the Gila River Dec. 11 (TC) and remained through the period at least until March 13 when a second individual was seen in the same area (TMc et al.). Large numbers of Great Blue Herons (many nesting), as well as several hundred Great Egrets, were observed in Chandler Feb. 5 (TC). A large number of 200 White-face Ibis were counted in s.w. Phoenix Dec. 16 (TC,KR). The **White Ibis**, present in the Palo Verde area since May 2003, remained there at least through December (PD,HD). An unusual concentration of more than 30 Black Vultures were counted at the El Mirage Pond Dec. 11 (TC); numbers were also recorded on the Tres Rios and Gila River CBCs (fide TC).

Between 11 and 38 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks were counted at ponds in Chandler during the winter (DP,TC). The Greater White-fronted Goose at Fountain Hills, continued to be seen at least until Jan. 15 (m.ob.). Another individual was reported at the Gilbert/Ocotillo Rd. ponds Dec. 12 at least until Jan. 8 (DP). Small numbers of Snow Geese (1-3) were observed at each of the following places: Palo Verde, Gilbert/Ocotillo Rd. ponds, Scottsdale

Pavilions, and McCormick Ranch during the winter (TC,HD,LLa,DP). Three Ross's Geese were seen at the Gilbert Water Ranch Dec. 5 (PD), up to three were reported at the Gilbert/Ocotillo Rd. ponds in December and early January (DP), one was seen in Palo Verde Dec. 7 (HD), and an adult and a first year bird were observed at McCormick Ranch Jan. 15 (TC).

Individual Wood Ducks were found between 91st and 115th Avenues along the Salt River Dec. 16 (TC,KR) and at the Gilbert Water Ranch Jan. 9 (PM). Three Eurasian Wigeons wintered in the Scottsdale area: one at the Paradise Cemetery at 92nd and Shea, one at Scottsdale Pavilions, and one at McCormick Ranch (JA,TC,ME,CR,MR). Individual Greater Scaup were observed below Parker Dam on the Colorado River Dec. 4 (CB,SS) and from Dec. 28 at least to Feb. 5 at the ASU Research Park (DC,TC). The female **White-winged Scoter**, found below Parker Dam in November, was seen there again Dec. 4 (CB,SS). A female **Long-tailed Duck** was discovered south of Parker Dam Dec. 20 at least to Dec. 28 (DP,PD).

Between two and four Com. Goldeneyes were present during the winter in Palo Verde (PD,HD), one was recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec.14 (fide KR), and one was observed at Freestone Park in Gilbert Dec. 28 (DC). Between one and four Barrow's Goldeneyes were observed below Parker Dam during December (CB,PD,DP,SS). Numbers of Hooded Mergansers were present at several locations during the winter, with a high of 11 at the ponds in Chandler Feb. 5 (TC) and 12 at Scottsdale Pavilions Feb. 15 (SO). A large number of "several hundred" Com. Mergansers were reported at ponds in Chandler Feb. 5 (TC).

A pair of Bald Eagles was found nesting at Lynx Lake in Prescott for the second year (fide CT). Two Red-shouldered Hawks were recorded at the Hassayampa River Preserve during the Christmas Count there Dec. 18 (VM). Another Red-shouldered Hawk was recorded at Granite Creek during the Prescott CBC Dec. 21; the species is considered to be accidental there (CT). A Rough-legged Hawk (a rare

winter visitor), found in Carefree Jan. 3 (MC,TC,JD), was new for that area. A lone Sandhill Crane (an irregular winter visitor) was observed near McQueen and Riggs Rd. Dec. 30 (LLa).

A **Semipalmated Plover** was discovered at the Scottsdale Pavilions Ponds Feb. 19 (CR); there have been only five previous winter records in Maricopa County. A large flock of Long-billed Curlews (usually uncommon in winter) was observed at Palo Verde Jan. 21 (MS). "Several hundreds" of Long-billed Curlews were reported in the Yuma area Dec. 22 (HD). Between three and six Dunlin (uncommon winter visitors) were found at the ponds in Palo Verde in December and January (PD,MS,RWd). A **Wilson's Phalarope** was discovered at the 91st Ave. (Tres Rios) sewage ponds Dec. 16 (WT,HB); there have been only two previous winter records in Maricopa County.

Two California Gulls (uncommon winter visitors) were found at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Dec. 4 and one remained at least until Dec. 12 (PD,HD). Numbers of Eurasian Collared Doves were up – 18 were counted during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (TC,KR). A White-winged Dove (rare in winter) was seen in a Tempe yard Dec. 23 (HF).

Four Long-eared Owls (rare winter visitors) were found during the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR). Three were found at Camp Creek during the Carefree CBC Jan. 3 (PMc,RC) and remained at least until Feb. 27 (WT et al.). One Short-eared Owl (an uncommon local winter visitor) was recorded on the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (fide TC).

The male Broad-billed Hummingbird, at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (hereafter BTA), continued to be seen there through the winter (PD,PM,CD).

A Lewis's Woodpecker (an irregular winter visitor), found at Oak Flat Campground (hereafter OFC) Dec.4 (KR), continued to be seen there at least through January (PM,CD,PD). Two Lewis's Woodpeckers were observed at Scottsdale Pavilions Jan. 19 (WT,HB) and remained at least until Feb. 19 (CR). A male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (a

continued on page 14

Field Observations

Continued from page 13

casual winter visitor), was discovered at BTA Jan. 20 (PL) and was still present there Feb. 5 (PM,CD). Individual "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flickers (rare winter visitors) were recorded along the Salt River, w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 16 (TC,KR), and in a Scottsdale yard Jan. 7, where it remained at least until March 1 (JBa).

An Eastern Phoebe (an uncommon winter visitor) was found along the Salt River, w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 16 (TC,KR). A **Thick-billed Kingbird** was found in Yuma for the third consecutive winter Jan. 30 and remained at least until Feb. 15 (HD). Individual Cassin's Vireos (uncommon winter visitors) were reported on the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (TC), on the Hassayampa River CBC Dec. 18 (VM), and at BTA Feb. 5 (PM,CD). A **Warbling Vireo** was discovered at the Gilbert Water Ranch Dec. 11 (PD), providing only the sixth winter record for Maricopa County. Two Tree Swallows (rare in winter) were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC (fide KR). Two early Violet-green Swallow were observed at BTA Feb. 5 (PM,CD).

Individual Winter Wrens were recorded on the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (TC,KR) and the Hassayampa River CBC Dec. 18 (VM). Six Golden-crowned Kinglets were recorded on the Hassayampa River CBC Dec. 18 (VM) and two were found along the Gila River w. of Buckeye Dec. 27 (TC). The Varied Thrush, found at OFC in mid-November, remained at least through December (PM,CD). Another individual was recorded on the Prescott CBC Dec. 21 (CT). The Brown Thrasher, at BTA since October, remained at least until Jan. 15 (DS). A Curve-billed Thrasher that was discovered in a Prescott yard Dec. 8 at least until Dec. 21 (JMo et al.), was a new species for that area.

For the second winter an Olive Warbler was discovered at a lowland location at BTA, Nov. 26 at least until Dec. 5 (MK,PM,CD). A No. Parula (a casual winter visitor) was found along the Gila River, w. of Buckeye Dec. 27 (TC). A Yellow Warbler (rare in winter) was observed at the Cobble Ponds during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (TC,KR). A male **Pine Warbler** was discovered and

photographed in a Tolleson yard Dec. 19 (BG), providing the fourth record for Maricopa County.

Three Black-throated Gray Warblers were found along the Salt River between 91st and 115th Ave. Dec. 16 (TC,KR). A Black-and-white Warbler was observed at the Cobble Ponds Dec. 11 and was still present there Dec. 16 (TC). Two Black-and-white Warblers were recorded on the Hassayampa River CBC Dec. 18 (VM). The Hooded Warbler, that was reported in a Scottsdale yard in mid-November, remained until Dec. 21 (JBa), providing the first December record and the fourth winter record for Maricopa County. A female Wilson's Warbler (rare and irregular in winter) was observed in a Chandler yard Feb. 22 (Llo).

A Swamp Sparrow was recorded during the Tres Rios CBC Dec. 16 (fide TC). The White-throated Sparrow, at BTA since early November, remained there at least until Jan. 15 (DS). A White-throated Sparrow was found at OFC Dec. 4 (KR) and remained until at least Jan. 30 (JBu,PD). Another individual was recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 28 (fide TC). The Harris's Sparrow, at OFC since mid-November, remained at least until Dec. 12 (MK). A Golden-crowned Sparrow was observed at OFC Dec. 4 (KR) and another two individuals were recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 28 (fide TC).

Four "Slate-colored" Dark-eyed Juncos (rare winter visitors) were observed at OFC Dec. 4 (KR); one continued to be seen there at least until Jan. 30 (PM,CD,DS,PD). Two Pyrrhuloxias, were observed Feb. 5 at BTA, an unusual place for the species (PM,CD), Individual Lawrence's Goldfinches were reported on the Gila River CBC Dec. 28 (fide TC) and in the McDowell Mt. Preserve Feb. 26 (MW).

Three unusual species occurred in other parts of the state during the winter. Two **Tufted Flycatchers** were discovered and photographed in n.w. Arizona where White Rock Canyon meets the upstream river part of Lake Mohave Feb. 24 (J&SS). This is the northernmost record

ever for this Mexican species which normally is not found north of Yecora in Sonora. There are two previous records of the species in the U.S. – both in Texas.

A **LeConte's Sparrow** was discovered along the Santa Cruz River, s. of Ina Rd. in Tucson, Dec. 19 (KK,PS) and remained at least until Feb. 10. There has been only one previous state record – at Topock, on the Lower Colorado River Nov. 29, 1981.

A female **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** was discovered at a feeder in a Tucson yard Jan. 2 and was still present there at the end of the period (RHo et al.). Even though the very similar female Black-chinned Hummingbird does not occur in Arizona in the winter, the bird was netted and measured to make sure it was not that species. This was the first record for Arizona.

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), many observers (m.ob.), Oak Flat Campground (OFC).

Observers: Jerry Allen, Charles Babbitt, Jack Bartley (JBa), Harvey Beatty, Jim Burns (JBu), Rick Carlson, Matt Chew, Tillie Chew, Dale Clark, Troy Corman, Henry Detwiler Pierre Deviche, Joy Dingley, Rich Ditch, Cynthia Donald, Marjorie Eckman, Herb Fibel, Bill Grossi, Rich Hoyer (RHo), Ron Huettner (RHu), Keith Kamper, Melody Kebl, Larry Langstaff (LLa), Paul Lehman, Linda Long (LLo), Tracy McCarthey, Patrick McMullen, James McKay, Vanessa Montgomery, Jim Morgan (JMo), Pete Moulton, Scott Olmstead, Dave Pearson, Kurt Rademaker, Carlos Ross, Mike Rupp, Peter Salomon, Julie ♂ Steven Servantez, Darlene Smythe, Sig Stangeland, Mark Stevenson, Walter Thurber, Carl Tomoff, Jolan Truan, Matt Wehman, Russ Widner (RWd).

expected large numbers of Western and Clark's Grebes were not to be found. Further up the lake however, we noted distant pairs of Western Grebes in the much cleaner water. Sunday morning we encountered approximately 8 California Gulls with the Ring-billed Gulls at Rotary Park in Lake Havasu City, along with a distant Common Loon. Off the north side of the island we discovered a distant Horned Grebe and a female Red-breasted Merganser. We also observed several other Common Loons in the area. Around the floating fishing piers at Site #6 we found two rather cooperative Pacific Loons, with one photogenic, chin-strapped individual often surfacing very close. Off one of the points in Lake Havasu NWR just north of the City we observed quite a few Eared Grebes. Other than several pairs of courting Clark's Grebes, there was little to be found at Catfish Paradise north of Topock. We made a brief stop at the Pintail Slough Unit, but we found much of the area is being bulldozed, hopefully to eventually create better habitat. Our final stop was a bluff overlooking Topock Marsh where several of us watched the synchronized foraging habits of a group of American White Pelicans. We all greatly appreciated the wonderful weekend weather and the spectacular scoped views of the cooing Greater Roadrunner at Lake Havasu City. Thanks to all the enthusiastic participants that made our jobs as trip leaders very easy. Troy Corman

Saturday, March 5 - Granite Reef Dam & Lower Salt River led by Charles Saffell

Despite a good chance of rain, about 15 birders joined our leader, Charles Saffell, for this favorite biannual field trip. For me, who led this trip in October, it was especially good to see Charles out birding again, after being disabled and having surgery in the fall. Our first stop was to check the ponds within Red Mountain Ranch just off Power Road. Here we started our day list with the expected Mallards, Ring-necked Ducks, and Pied-billed Grebe, and the uncommon sighting

of a pair of Buffleheads, plus the call of a Belted Kingfisher in flight.

At a dirt road that leads behind the Granite Reef Dam we saw Killdeer and Northern Rough-winged Swallows in flight. Four gulls were observed flying, and we identified them as Herring Gulls, not a common sighting. A Harris' Hawk that sat on some vegetation forming a very small island in the water was also unusual. Granite Reef Recreation Site, next "in line", offered some of us a view of a Hutton's Vireo in the trees soon after we got out of our vehicles. A Ladder-backed Woodpecker and Yellow-rumped Warbler were also tallied here. On our walk around the end of this area a few of us heard Bewick's Wren and Black-tailed Gnatcatcher; most of us saw Northern Cardinal and Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and some of us were fortunate to catch a pair of Lawrence's Goldfinches, perching only briefly in a tree.

When we reached Phon D. Sutton Recreation Site, the weather forecast became a reality, with rather heavy rain. Some of us stood under a ramada spotting an Anna's Hummingbird. The rain abated for a while at Coon Bluff Recreation Area, and I led some of the group through here, spotting pairs of Vermilion Flycatcher (including some "tricky" females), an Ash-throated Flycatcher, and a Red-naped Sapsucker. At the water, we saw Great Egret, Black Phoebe, Spotted Sandpiper, and Greater Yellowlegs. The rain returned as we got close to the rocky bluff, but a few of us persisted and although wet were able to see and/or hear a Canyon Wren.

Back on the road, we stopped outside the "Water Users Recreation Site", and were successful in seeing a Bald Eagle on a nest in the cliffs across the river. Charles told some of the group about the successful history of eagle nests here.

We proceeded on to Saguaro Lake, stopping along the road in a few places. Along the shore, we spotted a Common Yellowthroat; more saw the Lincoln's Sparrow. In the water, we observed Eared and Western Grebes; only one or two of us identified a Clark's Grebe in

the distance. Flying over the lake, we distinctly identified some Ring-billed Gulls (different from the gulls at the dam). On the cliffs across the lake, we saw a Rock Wren, Black-throated Sparrow, and high up, hard to really discern, White-throated Swifts.

I rode with Marjorie, our field trip chairperson and upon turning off the highway into our final birding stop of the day, the Butcher Jones Recreation Area, we saw an immature Golden Eagle in flight. Unfortunately, the bird disappeared before we could show it to others. From the Butcher Jones beach, we spotted Lesser Scaup in the water, Violet-green Swallows flying overhead, and a Brown-headed Cowbird over the picnic area.

By almost 4:00 P.M., most of us were quite tired, the skies had cleared, and we had amassed 69 species! Surprisingly, no Ospreys, but lots of Great-tailed Grackles! Richard Kaiser

Saturday, March 19 - Flagstaff Lakes led by Charles Babbitt

Eight birders met me at Denny's for a field trip at the Anderson Mesa lakes. Upper and Lower Lake Mary were as full as I have ever seen them. Mormon Lake was almost full. We birded in moderate to heavy snow showers all day. In spite of the weather we found 13 duck species including a Greater Scaup and other interesting birds including Bald Eagles and Pinyon Jays. Charles Babbitt I feel compelled to add a note to that of Charles in order to say that he had everyone's respect, more like awe for finding anything at all in difficult conditions. I personally was amazed at his quickness in identifying the ducks way out on the lake and hearing bird call/songs coming through only faintly. Thanks so much Charles - we enjoyed the beauty of the snow scenes also. Marjorie Eckman

Monthly Meetings

First Tuesday of the month, 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 at Shalimar Country Club in Tempe. The DBG is located at 1201 North 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, and 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 (October through April) are held at Pete's 19th Tee, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course), starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information--see notes and announcements for more detail

Your National membership entitles you to membership in the National Audubon Society and the Maricopa Audubon Society. National members receive bi-monthly issues of Audubon Magazine and quarterly issues of the Cactus Wren-dition. For all new National Audubon memberships send check or money order payable to National Audubon Society to: Membership Chair, Mike Rupp.

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For Wren-dition subscriptions only--\$20/year (Make your check payable to "Maricopa Audubon Society") to Mike Rupp at 740 E Highland Ave. #100, Phoenix, AZ 85014. For Summer/Winter address change or to freeze your membership in our chapter call Membership chair, Mike Rupp at 602-277-0439 or ruppar@mindspring.com

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

Bird Alert Line

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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.

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