



The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LIX, No. 2

Summer 2009



Breeding plumaged Eared Grebe

Maricopa Audubon Meetings & Programs May. 2009 - Sept. 2009

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

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden. The

Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix, which is approximately ½ mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. Although there is no charge to attend our general membership meetings, the Annual Banquet does require a dinner reservation and associated cost.

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

Golf Course) for the September through April 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 average \$5.00 to \$7.00.

Tuesday, September 1, 2009

Bob Witzeman **Birds of Ecuador**
Enjoy a beautiful travelogue from Maricopa Audubon Conservation Chair, Dr. Bob Witzeman from his Spring '09 adventure to Ecuador.

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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.

From the Editor, Deva Burns

This edition of the Wrendition will be my last. For nearly 10 years I have had the pleasure of bringing to you information from Maricopa Audubon Society. It has been an memorable experience. I have met and corresponded with some very knowledgeable and interesting birders who have taught me a lot. And, for these last two issues I have met three authors and gotten to read their books before they were published. Now it's time for someone else.

I would like to thank all of the Board members who have supported me throughout my tenure, and especially I am grateful to all those people who have faithfully submitted items for publication over the years. Without them I could not produce this newsletter.

Once the new Board is elected, they will be appointing a new Editor whom you will meet in the Fall Wrendition.

As always - Good birding!



Breeding plumaged Eared Grebe, photographed by Jim Burns, the ponds at The Pavilions, Scottsdale, March, 2009 with Canon 1D-Mill body and Canon 600mm f4 lens.

This hasn't happened since I was a kid back in New Rochelle. A bird flew inside my abode. While I was working, getting ready for my Basic Birding class, I noticed a particularly active Verdin investigating my patio table and chairs, and clinging to the stucco wall. It was on a quest it seemed either for nesting material or for insects to feed to its newborns. After a while I walked out onto the patio and left the sliding glass door open. In a flash the little girl flew into the apartment and clear to through to the kitchen window at the other end. I saw her hit the venetian blind, turn around and head back

towards me. I quickly stepped out of the doorway and thought I saw her wing past, so I hastily closed the sliding glass door so she wouldn't fly back in again, but I was wrong. She was still in the apartment. I didn't get the door back open in time and she hit it and stunned herself. I finally managed to get the door open once more, and out she flew. I hope she's all right.

I helped Education Chairman Mark Larson last weekend at the Feathered Friends Festival at the Gilbert Water Ranch. Fred Stewart and Olga Harbour pitched in as well. The event was well attended, and it gave us the opportunity

to interact and hand out materials to many youngsters and adults.

Our annual elections will be over when this is published. Many of the names on the back page of the Wren-dition may look familiar. If you are interested in serving in a leadership role in the Chapter, please make your interest known to us. We can not continue indefinitely being an STP organization.

We'll see you at the annual banquet! Below is a letter I did a little editing on for Bob. Bob then sent it to Congressman Harry Mitchell.

March 30,

Dear Congressman Mitchell,

It was a privilege having the opportunity to speak with you briefly at the Democratic Party event at Fred and Maureen Stewart's house Sunday about the opposition which the Maricopa Audubon Society and other conservation groups here about the proposed Resolution Copper Company (RCC) congressional land exchange.

As you may know, Fred Stewart is Maricopa Audubon Society's (MAS) chapter's publicity chair. Maureen Stewart is our recent past chapter Secretary. Like other Arizona Democrats, they share a strong disapproval of this NEPA-exempt land swap. Stewardship of Arizona's environment and our planet is where Democrats like you and the Stewarts make a difference.

As I mentioned to you, Herb Fibel, president of the Maricopa Audubon Society, Sandy Bahr, legislative staff person of the Sierra Club, I and two veteran multi-generation Superior, AZ copper miners, Henry Munoz and Sylvia Barrett, had the pleasure of meeting in your Scottsdale Office with your District Director, Robbie Sherwood this past March 24th.

Points we presented to Mr. Sherwood were:

The mine would be in open circumvention of the most important environmental and cultural protection law in our nation, namely the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). It is the Bill of Rights or the Magna Charta of U.S. environmental law! That bill's exemption from NEPA and an accompanying Environmental Impact Statement would deny the public the opportunity for review and oversight of the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of the project.

We related to Mr. Sherwood that both Presidents Eisenhower and Nixon by Presidential Decree declared the Oak Flat area so valuable to the public that it should ever be permanently off limits to mining.

RCC (made up of Britain's Rio Tinto and Australia's BHP Billiton) would inflict the destruction and collapse of a priceless environmental, cultural, and historical heirloom. It would obliterate and create a hole twice as deep and four or five times as wide as Niagara Falls with its proposed block-cave mining technology. Worldwide these British and Australian companies have been responsible for horrendous third world human rights and environmental records.

Because there would be no NEPA oversight of the engineering, cultural, environmental, or pollutions oversight under the proposed legislation, the inevitable destruction of Apache Leap and the water table destruction of the Devil's Canyon riparian masterpiece would not be disclosed (see enclosed diagram of Superior, AZ mining engineer George A. Lopez showing the certain destruction of Apache Leap by RCC's proposed "block-cave" mining method). The proposed updated NEPA-exempt 2009 U.S. Senate legislation has no engineering oversight mechanism that would assure protection of this historic and cultural Apache landmark.

Without NEPA the public will not have oversight or review of the obliteration of many miles of one of the most unique and ecologically diverse Sonoran Desert riparian areas in this state, namely, Devil's Canyon. The dewatering of that riparian treasure would be inevitable as a result of RCC's water table (aquifer) dewatering. Few, if any, Sonoran Desert riparian reaches in Arizona, present such a wide diversity of arboreal and plantlife species.

Without NEPA this treasure-trove of cultural, historical, endangered species and environmental heirlooms will be thrust aside. NEPA exemption, besides casting aside the Apache historic, cultural and sacred sites, shoves under the rug the destruction of Devil's Canyon, as well as the Oak Flat area's federally endangered, locally endemic cactus species, the Arizona Hedgehog Cactus, *Echinocereus triglochidiatus*, var. *arizonicus*. This proposed NEPA-exempt legislation would bypass the harms of the mine's copper smelter. It shoves under the rug the mine's disposal of acid mine wastes, and its air, aquifer and stream pollutions. Under this legislation these oversight impacts would be thrust aside for later, after the land has been privatized, and essentially vaccinated from public oversight of by NEPA, NHPA, and EIS.

NEPA discussion or oversight of the mine's huge water requirement will be circumvented in this land swap legislation. CAWCD purchases by RCC to date indicate it will consume as much water as the city of Tempe uses annually. The release of polluted water from the mine site and dissemination upon agricultural land or streamcourses or our state's aquifers would be unquantified and lack oversight by the citizens of this state and this nation.

Land swaps have been regularly disapproved by Arizona voters. Legislators and elected officials involved in land swaps have historically received strong, if not universal public disapproval and opprobrium.

Please let us know how we can be of help to you in this issue, Congressman Mitchell.

Sincerely,

Robert A. Witzeman, M.D., Conservation Chair, Maricopa Audubon Society
witzeman@cox 602 840-0052, fax 602 840-3001

Notes & Announcements



New Bird Publication Takes Flight-

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

Jim Burns' Arizona

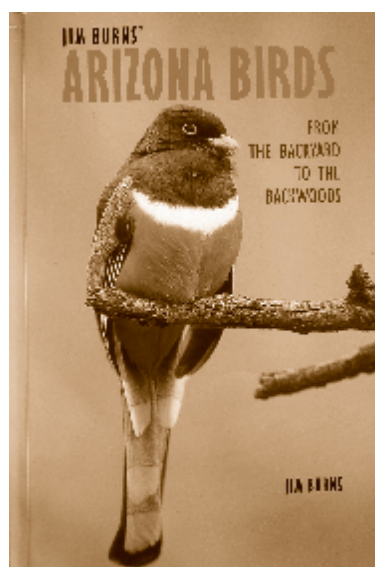
Birds-Jim Burns' Arizona Birds is a lively portrayal of the habits and habitats of seventy-five unique southwestern species. Burns has written much more than a field guide, site guide, or scientific survey . . . an original kind of birding book that is more at home on your bedside table than in your

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

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

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

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



to reduce unwanted mail by honoring your mail preferences. Catalog Choice has become a significant consumer voice in the direct mail industry. Nearly 200 catalog mailers are participating in Catalog Choice, and this number

grows every day. ? Please go to <http://www.catalogchoice.org/pages/merchants> to reduce the mailing of unwanted catalogs.

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

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

Birding Community E-Bulletin-

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

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge

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

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

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

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

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

Environmental Fund—Green At Work—Thousands of employees can now

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

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

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

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

certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co—www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491. And another from Kenn Kaufman is www.birdsandbeans.com

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

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



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

Canyon Wren

Jim Burns

Remember the word “onomatopoeia.” It sounds cool, but you can’t remember exactly what it means and there’s no chance of trying to spell it correctly. *Onoma* is Greek for “name,” *poiein* for “make.” Some common bird names are perfect examples of onomatopoeia—chickadee, cuckoo. Their names reflect the sounds they make.

That is if you’re human. But what if you were a bird, didn’t speak English (or Greek), and wanted your signature song, your natural name as it were, to reflect your home and your environment? What if you were a Canyon Wren dealing daily with stones and thunder tumbling down your precipitous world out of sight and hearing? Your song would be a series of clear, liquid whistles cascading down the musical scale, each note longer and lower than the one before it. For you, onomatopoeic. For the human beholder, a perfect mnemonic for your beautiful, wild, and vertical canyon world.

The Canyon Wren is resident throughout the mountain west from southwestern British Columbia all the way to southern Mexico and can be found in fourteen states. So why does it qualify as an Arizona special species? What can I say? This is the Grand Canyon State. Nothing, except Saguaro Cactus, says “Arizona” more than the Grand Canyon, and nothing sings “canyon” better than the Canyon Wren. I’d have been happy had it been chosen the state bird and, as with our state bird, the Cactus Wren, there is more Canyon Wren habitat—deep, watered canyons, cliff faces, boulder fields, rock walls rising from densely vegetated washes, even stone residences—in Arizona than in any other state in this bird’s range.

This is a species specially adapted in several ways for foraging in its rocky, environment. Its skull is longer and flatter than that of other wrens, and the bird’s spine attaches near the skull’s posterior end rather than underneath it. Additionally the Canyon Wren bill is longer and thinner in proportion to its head. The combination of these unique physical adaptations allows this little wren to enter and investigate the depths of narrow nooks and crannies in its rock world in search of insects and, perhaps its favored prey item, spiders.

Many a birdwatcher has experienced the magic of a foraging Canyon Wren seeming to disappear into solid rock. The observer glimpses the bird slipping into what appears to be a dead end crack or crevice, waits patiently for it to emerge for a better, longer look, then discovers the wren five minutes later and thirty feet higher up the

same rock wall. Or gives up, assuming this scenario, only to have the quarry reappear ten minutes later from the same crack or crevice into which it disappeared. Obviously the “rock mouse” has found tiny egress indiscernible to the human eye or has discovered multiple fissures and chambers in the rock worth exploring for its prey before coming back out the same place it went in.

These same cavities and clefts are often chosen as nest sites—ledges in rock grottoes, small caves behind boulders, narrow lips with protective overhangs at the edge of drop-offs. Small wonder that relatively little is known about Canyon Wren breeding biology and nesting behavior. Who finds these places and who could safely and comfortably set up a monitoring and research station in this challenging environment.

We do know that nests are the work of both

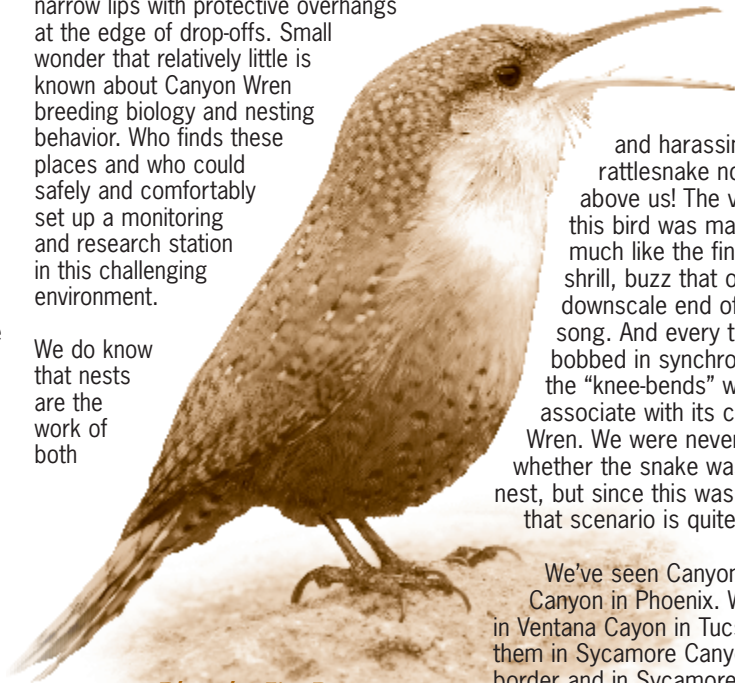


Photo by Jim Burns

sexes, small cups of twigs covered with softer materials such as animal hair, feathers, and plant down, and that spider webbing is used to bind it all together. Five or six eggs is average and incubation is by the female. Incubation time and time in the nest before fledging is not well known.

In addition to spiders and insects, Canyon Wrens will utilize seeds and berries in season, searching for these in the undergrowth at the base of cliffs or in the dense brush along canyon floors. A typical observation of foraging birds is for a pair to be seen working, usually up, a cliff face, hopping, running, and making short flights from ledge to ledge, disappearing for minutes at a time. Often, at or near the top, the male will suddenly pop out on an exposed edge, and pour out his signature song. Just as often, though, the birds will be unseen, the singer hidden behind a rock or inside a cave, and the enchanting cascade of notes will seem to emanate from the very rocks themselves. Needless to say, Canyon Wrens are heard way more

than they are seen and, when seen, they have usually been heard first.

The Canyon Wren is *Catherpes mexicanus*, the genus name from the Greek for “creeping down,” and the species name from the Latin for the country from which the first specimen was collected. My first ever sighting of this species occurred on a trail in Tonto Natural Bridge State Park north of Payson. Hiking with a group of friends and family, we heard a commotion on

the trailside cliff directly overhead, and looked up to find a Canyon Wren scolding

and harassing a very large rattlesnake not fifteen feet above us! The vocalizations this bird was making sounded much like the final high-pitched, shrill, buzz that often marks the downscale end of its beautiful song. And every time it buzzed, it bobbed in synchronicity, much like the “knee-bends” we have come to associate with its cousin, the Rock Wren. We were never able to ascertain whether the snake was threatening a nest, but since this was early summer that scenario is quite likely.

We’ve seen Canyon Wrens in Echo Canyon in Phoenix. We’ve seen them in Ventana Canyon in Tucson. We’ve seen them in Sycamore Canyon on the Mexican border and in Sycamore Canyon in the Verde Valley. One of the best locations to see, or actually to hear them, is at the Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park west of Superior. At almost any time of year there is almost certain to be a pair working the cliffs west of the trail as it drops down from Ayer Lake to Queen Creek. The Rock Wrens seem to favor the cliffs on the east side of this trail, and with a little luck both species may be present at the same time. Half way along the creek to the Herb Garden the trail passes under the overhanging cliffs and makes a sharp turn at a rock grotto. We have had Canyon Wrens above us in this area where the echoes reverberate and the song becomes ventriloquial, filling the soul with the perfect sound to evoke the surrounding natural beauty of the gorge.

And, yes, we’ve had Canyon Wrens at the Grand Canyon. I didn’t have a vote on Arizona’s state bird but, right now as I think about it, if I had I would not have voted for the Cactus Wren. Not after hearing a Canyon Wren singing down its canyons.

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

These three species represent a family that, like the owls to which they are closely related, are seldom seen, can be hard to identify when they are seen, but are quite readily identified by voice. Here's your chance to key on some visual clues to the three members of the family you're most likely to experience in Arizona.

All photos by Jim Burns



A. Good photo, easy bird



B. Good photo, difficult bird



C. Good photo, difficult bird

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

May through August, 2009

CAR POOLING: Please make every effort to organize your own carpool; consolidate vehicles at meeting places and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 10 cents per mile. Be courteous to the trip leader and help cover their gas costs.

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

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

REMINDERS:

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

*Day Passes Required for National Forests.

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

Impromptu Field Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others planned field trips on short notice. Also get reminders of MAS field trips by email. Founded by naturalist Mike Plagens, membership is easy, free and open to those who have an interest in the flora, fauna, and ecology of Arizona. Not just a trip listing, view the website for trip reports, flora and fauna databases, maps, links to google earth including Gilbert Water ranch, and photos. Trips focus on plants, animals, mycology, geology, biology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, paleontology, birding, anthropology or microbiology. Share expenses, experiences and expertise with like-minded travelers. Proposed trips should include a brief description of the destination, ways, means, purpose, hiking difficulty, departure location, date and time. Drivers and riders will negotiate between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the

cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/

Saturday, May 16

***Rogers Trough and Montana Mountain:** We will travel up FS172 northeast of Queen Valley to Rogers Trough, a beautiful riparian area in the Superstition Mountains. From there, we will continue on FS650 to the north face of Montana Mountain, a seldom-visited area at nearly 6,000 feet. Vegetation changes from saguaro desert to cottonwood corridors to alligator and one-seed junipers as we gain elevation. The country is spectacular, and the bird life is rich and varied. Expect Spotted and Canyon Towhees, Scrub and Steller's Jays, Bushtits, Bluebirds, and a very wide variety of Flycatchers, Vireos and Warblers. The hiking is fairly level, although some at almost 6,000 feet. Even in May, temperatures can be cool in the shaded areas of Montana Mountain, so bring a light jacket. The road is rough in spots with creek crossings. High-clearance vehicles are required (4WD is recommended). Bring lunch, plenty of water, and a scope (optional). End near 6:00PM. Maximum 15. Difficulty 3 (appx. 5 miles hiking, some higher-elevation). \$6/vehicle Tonto National Forest pass required. Meet 6:00AM Open Range Steakhouse, 6030 S. King's Ranch Rd, Gold Canyon (1 mile northeast of US 60, on the north side of King's Ranch Rd).

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

Saturday, May 16th

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Bring binoculars (close focal



Roseate Skimmer and Blue Dasher
©2007 Laurie Nessel

point preferred). Learn to identify Painted Lady, Giant Sulphur, Queen, Buckeye, Giant Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies; Desert Firetail, Blue-ringed Dancer, Northern Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer and Bluet dragonflies and damselflies. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert

Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1

Leader: Bob Witzeman

Friday, June 12

Christopher Creek. Christopher Creek is about 20 miles east of Payson on the Mogollon Rim. We can expect the lovely summer migrants and year-round high elevation birds. Got a rose-breasted grosbeak two years ago. We'll bird the CC campground, the town and probably a little-known subdivision where people hang feeders for great views. We'll leave Scottsdale about 5:45am and return about 2pm. Plenty of walking. Best with only 2 cars, 8 people. Please pack a lunch. Small fee for day use of the CC campground.

Leader: Kathe Anderson for reservations and carpool arrangements kathe.coot@cox.net. 480.951.4890.

Saturday, June 13

Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Dragonflies and Butterflies. This is Maricopa Audubon Society's first season leading trips to this urban oasis. While bird watching slows down in the summer heat, insect populations increase. The urban wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are quickly becoming a haven for birds and insects. We will see which beautiful and fascinating butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies have found the park's 113 acres of Sonoran Desert and wetlands habitat. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. The walks are not fast-paced, and the terrain is easy. This program is free, and pre-registration is not required. (There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Environmental Education Center). *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Curve-billed Thrasher Ramada just north of the main parking lot. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. Done by 10:00AM.

Leader: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

Saturday, June 13

Hart Prairie Preserve, Flagstaff.

Sightings of Clark's Nutcracker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Western and Mountain Bluebirds and Williamson's Sapsucker are possible.

It should be really beautiful this year with all the snow and water. Bring lunch, snacks, water. Difficulty 2 (fairly easy hike at high altitude). Meet 7:30AM at the Museum of Northern Arizona, north of Flagstaff on US180.

Leader: Charles Babbitt, 602.840.1772, Charles.Babbitt@old.maricopa.gov for reservations, information and any changes.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

field trips

Saturday, June 20

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. See information from May 16th

Leaders: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

Sunday, June 28

Fort Huachuca Canyons. Revisit the canyons inside Fort Huachuca near Sierra Vista, an area our chapter has not had a field trip to for many years. The elevation climbs from the grasslands and picnic area of Garden Canyon, which are likely to have Painted Redstart, Arizona Woodpecker, and Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher; then on to the famous Scheelite Canyon to locate Spotted Owls, Dusky-capped Flycatcher, and Hepatic Tanager; and finally to Sawmill Canyon, known for its Buff-breasted Flycatcher and probably Yellow-eyed Junco and Grace's Warbler. We will meet at 7:00 A.M. at the visitor center just outside the Main Gate. Positive personal and vehicle identification, as well as proof of insurance, are required. Bring a lunch and plenty of water.

Leader: Richard Kaiser, 602-276-3312 or rkaiserinaz@aol.com.

July, date TBA

Stewart Mountain Desert Tortoise Quest.

Have you ever seen a Sonoran Desert tortoise in the wild? Increase your chances of stumbling upon one of these iconic desert creatures by searching in their preferred habitat after a summer monsoon. For this reason, we are not setting an exact date for this trip near Saguaro Lake until the monsoon has begun and conditions are right. We will collect email



Sonoran Desert Tortoise
© 2008 Laurie Nessel

addresses and phone numbers and contact you one day before or possibly the morning of the walk. Learn about the behavior, life cycle and status of this keystone species. Leader Laurie Nessel found 12 wild tortoises last season. Limit 10. Difficulty 3- steep, rocky terrain and hot, humid weather. Bring snacks, sun protection, hat, sturdy hiking shoes, plenty of water. We will start near daybreak and be back before noon.

Leader: Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.com to get on the call list.

Monday, July 13

Madera Canyon. Probably no introduction needed here! Should be full of summer migrants-our colorful warblers, buntings, tanagers, etc. and with luck, the trogon and unusual hummingbirds. We'll leave Scottsdale about 5am, and start at the bottom of the canyon, then the higher elevations before planting ourselves at Kubos/Santa Rita Lodge for a while. Plenty of walking. Best with only 2 cars, 8 people. Please pack a lunch. Small fee for day use of the Canyon. Return about 4ish.

Leader: Kathe Anderson for reservations and carpool arrangements kathe.coot@cox.net, 480.951.4890.

Saturday, July 18

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. See information from May 16th

Leaders: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

August, date TBA

Stewart Mountain Desert Tortoise Quest.

Have you ever seen a Sonoran Desert tortoise in the wild? Increase your chances of stumbling upon one of these iconic desert creatures by searching in their preferred habitat after a summer monsoon. For this reason, we are not setting an exact date for this trip near Saguaro Lake until the monsoon has begun and conditions are right. We will collect email addresses and phone numbers and contact you one day before or possibly the morning of the walk. Learn about the behavior, life cycle and status of this keystone species. Leader Laurie Nessel found 12 wild tortoises last season. Limit 10. Difficulty 3- steep, rocky terrain and hot, humid weather. Bring snacks, sun protection, hat, sturdy hiking shoes, plenty of water. We will start near daybreak and be back before noon.

Leader: Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.com to get on the call list.

Friday-Sunday, August 7-9

Reynolds Creek. SR288 is now paved the entire route to this 5,200' Ponderosa Pine and oak campground in the Sierra Anchas. Leader Chuck LeFevre has reserved a campsite for three days. Join us for any or all of these days as we hike Hell's Hole and Reynolds Creek Trails. Possible species include Red Crossbills, Mexican Jays, Sulphur-Bellied Flycatchers, Magnificent Hummingbird and Hybrid Juncos. We will also concentrate on the diverse plant community. Campers may be rewarded with Whip-poor-will and Flammulated Owl. \$5 fee per night to share a spacious campsite with Sierra Singles. Reynolds Creek is 22 miles north of Junction 188 and 288. Limit 6.

Leader: Chuck LeFevre
Reservations and Information: Laurie Nessel 480.968.5614, laurienessel@gmail.com.

Saturday, August 8

Chandler Veterans Oasis Park Dragonflies and Butterflies. This is Maricopa Audubon Society's first season leading trips to this urban oasis. While bird watching slows down in the summer heat, insect populations increase. The urban wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are quickly becoming a haven for birds and insects. We will see which beautiful and fascinating butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies have found the park's 113 acres of Sonoran Desert and wetlands habitat. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. The walks are not fast-paced, and the terrain is easy. This program is free, and pre-registration is not required. (There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Environmental Education Center). *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. Meet at 7 a.m. at the Curve-billed Thrasher Ramada just north of the main parking lot. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. Done by 10:00AM.

Leader: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

Monday, August 10

Kachina Wetlands. A little known and absolutely beautiful meadowy area just south of Flagstaff, with ponds, marshes and views of the San Francisco Peaks. Last August we were surrounded by bluebirds, with Wilson's phalaropes in the ponds, great views of osprey and a nice variety of higher elevation birds. Scopes would be helpful. Plenty of walking-but flat. We'll leave Scottsdale about 5:30am, returning about 3ish. Best with only 2 cars, 8 people. Please pack a lunch.

Leader: Kathe Anderson for reservations and carpool arrangements kathe.coot@cox.net, 480.951.4890.

Saturday, August 15

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. See information from May 16th

Leaders: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

Saturday, September 12

Page Springs. We will visit the Page Springs fish hatchery near Camp Verde and bird other nearby locations. Possible Yellow-billed Cuckoo, American Redstart and Prothonotary Warbler. Spotting scopes are helpful. Bring lunch. Call leader for meeting time and place.

Leader: Herb Fibel 480.966.5246, herbertsfibel@aol.com.

Saturday, September 19

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. See information from May 16th

Leaders: Laurie Nessel or Bob Witzeman

Bird Populations and Global Warming

Bob Witzeman

"In every walk with nature, one receives far more than he seeks."
– John Muir (1838-1914)

Temperature and weather changes from global warming have elicited dramatic bird population changes in Arizona since my wife and I arrived in Arizona in 1958. Many Arizona birds have moved northward in their breeding ranges and in their overwintering localities.

When we first arrived in Phoenix it was unusual to find Neotropical Cormorants or Black-bellied Tree Ducks in Maricopa County. They could be found in southern Arizona. Now they are a year-round inhabitants here in central Arizona.

Reasons why overwintering warblers and other migrants are less common may be global warming and/or habitat losses to both their nesting habitats and their neotropical migratory habitats. Sun coffee, palm oil and row crop plantations, rainforest logging, forest conversions to croplands, and slash and burn logging for cattle grazing are some of the culprits. Phoenix Christmas Counts in past decades had a great many (sometimes thousands recorded) of Yellow-rumped Warblers wintering along the Salt River and elsewhere. I could hardly ever visit my backyard some years back without hearing several of them. Now they are the exception.



Olivaceous Cormorant, photo by Jim Burns: Until recent years this bird was unknown to nest in Maricopa County. It has moved northward from Southern Arizona along with the Black-bellied Whistling Duck.

The National Audubon Society and American Bird Conservancy (NAS/ABC) recently reported that nearly 60% of the 305 species found in North America in winter are shifting their ranges northward by an average of 35 miles.

However, the extension northward of U.S. grassland nesting species has not occurred. Only 38% of our grassland species mirrored the northward trend of other U.S. grassland nesting species. Far from being good news for U.S. species

like Eastern Meadowlark and Henslow's Sparrow, this reflects the grim reality of our severely-depleted grassland habitats. It suggests that these species now face a double threat from the stresses of both habitat loss and climate adaptation. In Arizona grassland habitats

have become victims of livestock overgrazing, rangeland conversions to farmlands and meteoric urbanization.

The North American species moving north the most from global warming has been the Purple Finch. It was calculated to have moved its nesting habitat an average of 400 miles north! We may expect to see fewer Canadian and Boreal life zone species such as Purple and Cassin's

Finches on Arizona Christmas Counts.

Overwintering sparrows here in central Arizona have sustained noticeable declines in our central Arizona Christmas Counts. Brewer's, Chipping, Song, White-crowned, Lark, Fox, and Lincoln's Sparrow declines may be victims of both global warming and/or losses of nesting or overwintering habitat here. These may be the result of North American logging, mining, oil and gas well-fields, urbanization, and the destructive livestock overgrazing of grasslands. These man-related impacts severely impact the nesting and overwintering sparrow habitats throughout the west.

Back in northern Ohio where I was raised and went to college and medical school the northward movement of bird species has been dramatic. Now when I return to visit family and friends I see southern U.S. species I never regularly encountered such as Mockingbird, Carolina Wren, Carolina Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Red-shouldered and Rough-legged Hawk.

In conclusion, we must take all aspects of global warming seriously. It's not just sun coffee, palm oil, sugar cane, neotropical deforestations and plastic grocery bags. It includes the impacts of our own auto, rail, and highway transportation decisions, and our nuclear, coal, sun, wind, tidal and wave power balancing acts. These issues deserve our utmost oversight and some technology miracles besides if we are to continue to enjoy the diversity of birdlife here. And we must add to that our continued due diligence for our grassland, forest, wetland, and riverine habitats.

DECEMBER, JANUARY, FEBRUARY 2009

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Lower River Road Ponds (LRRP), Tempe Marketplace (TM), Tempe Town Lake (TTL).

The number of White-fronted Geese increased from one in the fall to four during the winter. Individuals were reported at the ASU Research Ponds in Tempe 7 Dec – 12 Jan (PD et al.), at a golf course pond in Peoria 11 Jan (RHa), at Apache Park in Scottsdale 2 Feb (EDeM), and at Val Vista Lakes in Gilbert 9 Feb (MMo). At least eight Ross's Geese were observed at McCormick Ranch 27 Dec (TC); individuals were also reported at the LRRP 7 Dec (MHe), and during the Aquatic Bird Survey 17 Jan at ponds in Cave Creek (DPo), at Sun Lakes (TC), and in Mesa (PN). Between one and six Lesser Canada Geese were observed at McCormick Ranch 25 Dec – 10 Jan (MWeb, PD, MMo), between one and two were reported at Scottsdale Pavilions 28 Dec – 3 Jan (PD), and one was seen at GWR 2 Feb (MMo).

Three Wood Ducks were reported at a Paradise Valley golf course pond 17 Jan (DPo) and between two and three were observed on TTL 1-7 Feb (PMo, CD, TLo). A male Eurasian Wigeon and a hybrid Eurasian x American Wigeon were observed at a pond in Scottsdale 20 Dec – 10 Jan (PD, MWeb, DPo, TC) and the Eurasian Wigeon remained at least until 13 Feb (PD). Another hybrid Eurasian x American Wigeon was found at Ocotillo in Chandler 13 Jan into March (MMo, ES, TC). Between two and four "Mexican" Mallards were reported at GWR 5 Jan – 3 Feb (MMo). Two Blue-winged Teal (uncommon in winter before mid-February) were seen at Tres Rios 8 Dec (MHe) and one was reported in s.w. Phoenix 28-30 Dec (DPo).

A male **Eurasian (Common) Green-winged Teal** was discovered at TTL 9 Jan into March (MSc, ph. PD et al.). There has been only one previous documented sighting of this subspecies in Arizona: a male at GWR 2 Mar '08. Individual male **Greater Scaup** were found at Kiwanis Park in Tempe 27 Dec (PD), at the Gila Bend WTP 2 Jan (CBab, SSt), and at Kearny Lake in Pinal Co. (an imm. male) 3-10 Jan (RHo). A juv. **White-winged**

Scoter, discovered at Kearny Lake 2 Jan (PN, ph. BGri) remained until 10 Jan and provided the second record for Pinal Co. (DJ et al.). Two juv. Red-breasted Mergansers, uncommon winter visitors, were reported at Fountain Hills Lake 12 Jan (ES).

The two Wild Turkeys, found at BTA in November, remained through the period (PWo et al.).

Individual **Pacific Loons**, casual winter visitors, were discovered at McCormick Ranch 25 Dec – 10 Jan (CK, PMo, RDi, PD, PN) and on TTL 11 Jan – 1 Feb (PMo, CD, et al.). Individual Com. Loons were reported in Casa Grande, Pinal Co. 12 Dec (AC) and on TTL 24-26 Jan (JaMc, TC, PWa). Forty-two American White Pelicans were counted w. of 91st Ave. in s.w. Phoenix 19 Dec (TC), 11 were counted near Buckeye 31 Jan (TC), four were reported at the LRRP 13 Feb (RWi, LHat), and four were seen at Rio Salado 21 Feb (TGA). Brown Pelicans, especially adults, are uncommon in winter. An adult and a juv. Brown Pelican were observed on TTL 3 Jan and were still present in early March (MSc, DPo, TC et al.). A sub-adult Brown Pelican was seen with the other two on TTL 11-12 Jan (MSc). From 50 – 100 Neotropic Cormorants were counted at Tres Rios 8 Dec (MHe), numbers at GWR went from a low of only two on 12 Jan, to 60, 18 Jan – 3 Feb (MMo); 101, including two carrying nest material, were counted in Chandler (where they have nested previously) 17 Jan (TC), and five were observed at Gillespie Dam 3 Feb (PL).

Two American Bitterns, uncommon winter visitors, were recorded on the Gila River CBC 30 Dec (TC). Individual juv. **Reddish Egrets**, rare visitors, were discovered in Chandler 27 Dec – 21 Jan (DC, JMa, PD et al.) and at Gillespie Dam 31 Jan (TC). It may have been the same bird at both locations. The number of White-face Ibis in Arlington increased from 100, 20 Dec (MHe) to 250-300, 13 Feb (JLa); 33 were counted in Chandler 17 Jan (TC). A large number of 113 Black Vultures were counted w. of the Salt/Gila River confluence 21 Dec (THld).

One of the two Ospreys wintering at TTL was seen carrying a stick 25 Jan (TC), a hopeful sign; the species has nested in Maricopa Co., but not since before 1951. A White-tailed Kite, an uncommon

winter visitor, was observed in the Palo Verde area 2-30 Dec (LHar, DVP, CBab, TC). A surprising number of Bald Eagles were reported in urban areas during the winter: an adult at McCormick Ranch 10-15 Jan (MWeb, MBe), an adult and juvenile at TTL 25 Jan – 14 Feb (MWeb, PMo, CD, THld), a juvenile at the lake by Buster's in Scottsdale 5 Feb (CBab), an adult at the Agua Fria Recharge Ponds in Glendale 13-20 Feb (RWz, MHe, KR), a first winter bird at Rio Salado 31 Feb (TGA), and one at Val Vista Lakes in Gilbert 21 Feb (fide MMo). One of the Red-shouldered Hawks at HRP was seen 20 Dec (fide VM). A Zone-tailed Hawk, not as uncommon in winter as it was in the past, was observed at McCormick Ranch 26-27 Dec (ph. TLo, LLo); another, or the same, individual was seen near Camelback Mt., 16 Jan (HH).

A larger than usual number of Sandhill Cranes (more than 450) were counted along Old US 80, 11 Jan (MHe); the only higher count for Maricopa Co. was the 750 reported at Gillespie Dam in February a year ago.

Between two and three American Avocets, uncommon in winter, were reported at GWR 18 Jan – 2 Feb (MMo) and up to four were observed at the Agua Fria Recharge Ponds during January and February (RWz et al.); numbers increased to ten at GWR 22 Feb (MMo). The N. Jacana, at a golf course pond in Casa Grande, was last seen there 21 Dec (DJ et al.). A Lesser Yellowlegs, a rare winter visitor, was observed at GWR 5 Jan (MMo) and two were found along the Gila River at Cotton Lane 31 Jan (TC). Again, as last winter, a large group of Long-billed Curlews was found s.w. of Phoenix: 110 were counted in a flooded field in Palo Verde 31 Jan (TC). A W. Sandpiper, a rare winter visitor, was observed along the Verde River at Ft. McDowell 13 Dec (TC, JJ, MV). A **Ruff** was discovered at the Agua Fria Recharge Ponds 13 Feb (ph. RWz), providing the fifth record for Maricopa Co. (The one discovered last winter represented the fourth record, not the third as mistakenly published in last Winter's Report). There have been two previous fall records and two previous winter records.

A first winter Bonaparte's Gull, rare in winter, was photographed at the Agua Fria Recharge Ponds 13-14 Feb (RWz).

continued on page 12

Field Observations

Continued from page 11

An adult California Gull was observed at the Casa Grande WTP 18 Dec TC; there are few winter records for Pinal Co. A California Gull, uncommon in winter in Maricopa Co., was reported at Rio Salado 21 Feb (TGA).

Numbers of over-wintering White-winged Doves have been increasing during the past five years. This winter, between one and two were reported in a Tempe yard during December and January (J&LS), and individuals were seen in Scottsdale 12 Jan (HBon), at Reach 11 in Phoenix 7 Feb (MSc), and at BTA 10 Feb (PK). Numbers of **Ruddy Ground-Doves** were found wintering again along Southern Ave., w. of 119th Ave.: between six and nine were counted there 4 Jan – 23 Feb (JA, TC, MHe, GN).

Two Long-eared Owls, rare winter visitors, were discovered along the Salt River, w. of 91st Ave., 21 Dec (TC) and one was found at Oak Flat, Pinal Co. 28 Jan (DJ). Individual Lesser Nighthawks, rare winter visitors, were observed in Scottsdale 10 Dec (MWeb) and w. of 91st Ave., 21 Dec (TC); four were recorded on the Gila River CBC 30 Dec (TC).

The Violet-crowned x Broad-billed Hummingbird hybrid at BTA remained through the period. A male **Williamson's Sapsucker**, a rare winter visitor, was discovered in Cave Creek 2 Jan (JRU, MDr). A **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** and a possible hybrid or **Red-breasted Sapsucker**, both also rare in winter, were found at Camp Creek 2 Jan (TC).

The Bell's Vireo, wintering at GWR for the third consecutive year, remained at least until 3 Feb (MMo, PMo). A Plumbeous Vireo, an uncommon winter visitor, was observed in Cave Creek 11 Jan (HBe).

Three early Cliff Swallows were seen at Gillespie Dam 3 Feb (PL) and a migrant was seen at GWR 8 Feb (TC). For the past decade Cliff Swallows have been returning to their nesting area about two weeks earlier than in previous years, and again this winter, numbers were observed nest-building at Rio Salado 21 Feb (TGA). Barn Swallows are uncommon in winter, so of interest were the seven that were recorded on the Gila River CBC 30 Dec (TC),

The Brown Creeper, that was reported in Eldorado Park in November, remained

until early January (JBA). Two **Winter Wrens**, rare winter visitors, were recorded on the Hassayampa River CBC 20 Dec (*fide* VM); two more individuals were found at Camp Creek 1 Jan (TC). The **Eastern Winter Wren**, that was reported in a Mesa yard 24 Nov (JMil), remained until 15 Feb (ph. MMo, recordings PD). The Brown Thrasher was observed back at BTA 7 Dec for the tenth consecutive winter (GN) and remained through the period (m. ob.). A **Sprague's Pipit**, a rare winter visitor, was discovered east of the confluence of the Gila and Hassayampa Rivers 28-30 Dec (DPo).

A **Tennessee Warbler**, a casual early winter visitor, was photographed in Sun City Grand 2 Dec (DSh, *fide* RHo) and remained at least until 17 Dec (RHa). Individual **Nashville Warblers**, also casual winter visitors, were discovered along the Gila River, s.w. of Buckeye 28-30 Dec (DPo) and at Scottsdale Pavilions 10 Jan (TC). **N. Parula** is increasing as a winter visitor to Maricopa Co.: two were found along the Verde River at Ft. McDowell 15 Dec (TC, JJ), two were found at the Tres Rios Cobble Ponds 20 Dec (TC), and one was observed by the lake next to Buster's Restaurant in Scottsdale 17 Jan (BIs) where it remained at least until 14 Feb (MHe). Individual Yellow Warblers were observed at Veteran's Memorial Park 2 Jan (AC), at TM 10-26 Jan (TC, MMo), and next to Buster's Restaurant 17-26 Jan (BIs, MMo) and remained at least until 26 Jan (MMo). The Chestnut-sided Warbler, that was found at BTA in November, was last seen there 4 Jan (RDi).

Three Black-throated Gray Warblers were observed at TM 10 Jan (TC) and one was still seen there 17 Jan (MWeb). A male Townsend's Warbler, an irregular winter visitor, was found at BTA 9 Jan and remained through the period into March (JKo, ph. RWz, PK, ErH). Individual Black-and-white Warblers, uncommon winter visitors, were recorded on the Hassayampa River CBC 20 Dec (*fide* VM) and next to Buster's Restaurant 25 Jan – 14 Feb (TC, MHe). The female American Redstart, found at GWR in November, remained until 25 Feb (MMo et al.). A **Worm-eating Warbler** was discovered at Rio Salado 31 Jan (JJ) and remained through the period into March (TGA, ph. BGri, RDi); there have been 11 previous county records. A female Wilson's Warbler, a rare winter visitor, was found

at Veterans Oasis Park in Chandler 2-18 Jan (BGri, AC, MMo). The male Wilson's Warbler, at GWR since 11 Nov, was still present there 8 Feb (TC).

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was discovered at TM 25 Jan – 15 Feb (TLo et al.) and provided the second January and February records for the county. Two Swamp Sparrows were observed at the Tres Rios Cobble Ponds 20-22 Dec (TC), one was found at Estrella Mt. Ranch 21 Dec. (DPo), and two were seen w. of Buckeye 28-30 Dec (DPo). A White-throated Sparrow was observed at BTA 7 Feb + (RDi, CW, TC). A first year **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, a rare winter visitor, was found along the Salt River near 107th Ave., 20-22 Dec (TC). An adult male **Dickcissel** was discovered at a feeder in Peoria 9 Feb (ph. JDe, *fide* TSu) and provided the first winter record for the county.

An adult male **Orchard Oriole** returned 1 Dec for the third consecutive winter to a feeder in Surprise (ph. DSh, *fide* RHo).

Observers: John Arnett (JA), Charles Babbitt (CBab), Jack Bartley (JBA), Harvey Beatty (HBe), Mary Berkley (MBE), Harold Bond (HBon), Dale Clark (DC), Andre Core (AC), Troy Corman (TC), Everton DeMelo (EDeM), Jeanette Detert (JDe), Pierre Deviche (PD), Rich Ditch (RDi), Cynthia Donald (CD), Marc Dragiewicz (MDr), Tom Gaskill (TGA), Brendon Grice (BGri), Ron Haaseth (RHa), Lauren Harter (LHar), Liz Hatchler (LHat), Melanie Herring (MHe), Holly Hicks (HH), Tom Hildebrandt (THld), Eric Hough (ErH), Rich Hoyer (RHo), Brian Isom (BI), Doug Jennings (DJ), Justin Jones (JJ), Claudia Kirscher (CK), Philip Kline (PK), Jim Kopitzke (JKo), Jim Lauren (JLa), Paul Lehman (PL), Linda Long (LLo), Tyler Loomis (TLo), John Mann (JMa), James McKay (JaMc), Jay Miller (JMil), Vanessa Montgomery (VM), Mike Moore (MMo), Pete Moulton (PMo), Phil Norton (PN), Gary Nunn (GN), Dave Powell (DPo), Kurt Radamaker (KR), Jeff Rusinow (JRU), Myron Scott (MSc), Dominic Sherony (DSb), Sig Stangeland (SSt), Justin & Laura Stewart (JeLS), Ed Strong (ES), Tice Supplee (TSu), David Vander Pluym (DVP), Marceline Vanderwater (MV), Paul Watson (PWA), Magill Weber (MWeb), Cindy West (CW), Russ Widner (RWi), Robert Witzeman (RWz), Paul Wolterbeck (PWo).

Our three photos show birds that manifest many of the characteristics of the owl family—variegated and cryptic coloration, large eyes, and large heads to accommodate those large eyes. The latter two are physical adaptations necessary for birds like owls that are crepuscular or nocturnal, so these must be birds which can see in dim light and are thus not usually themselves seen in broad daylight and, in fact, not typically seen at all and not easy to study closely when the odd chance occurs.

These birds are goatsuckers, a family proven by DNA studies to be closely related to the owls, yet with several dissimilarities. You can see our quiz birds' eyes are on the sides of their heads, not forward facing like those of owls, they have small beaks and, although the photos do not show feet and legs, we might guess their legs are short and their feet weak because the two "perched" birds are resting on the ground rather than on a branch. The family name comes, as you probably know, from the bizarre myth that these birds fly, by night, into barns and suck the milk from goats. This was, perhaps, the original urban legend, part of birding folklore before there were any urban areas.

A) Good photo, easy bird

Seven members of the goatsucker family regularly occur in North America. I'd venture to guess five of these, the nightjars, have been identified by voice only by far more birders than have actually seen them. The other two, however, are visually familiar to most birders who have observed them hawking insects, typically near bright highway or athletic field lights shortly after sundown in warm weather or on migration. These two are the nighthawks, distinguished from the nightjars by their long, pointed wings and crepuscular feeding habits.

Our first quiz bird presents the usual nighthawk conundrum. It is readily identified as a nighthawk by its fluttering, erratic, bat-like flight and the striking white bar across the wing, but is it a Lesser or a Common? Though the latter is slightly larger with more heavily and contrastingly barred underparts, these distinctions are not diagnostic. Look for two things—the shape of the wingtip and the placement of that white bar on that wingtip. The wingtip of the Common Nighthawk is sharply pointed and its wingbar originates very close to the base of the primary feathers on the leading wing edge, then runs diagonally across the wing. The wingtip of the Lesser appears more rounded and its wingbar begins farther out along the primaries and runs almost straight across the wing.

Wingshape and wingbar placement make the white slash on the wings of Lessers appear much closer to the tip than that of Commons. Using these criteria, we can see that the nighthawk in our first photo is a Lesser, the bright white throat patch marking it as a male. This photograph was taken near the lake in Fountain Hills in late August, 2005 as nighthawks were beginning to concentrate prior to their fall migration to Central and South America.

Lesser Nighthawks, though perhaps not commonly seen, are common residents of our Sonoran deserts. Day roosts are either on the ground or in low in trees where these birds perch horizontally, lengthwise along the branches. Look for them, especially during fall migration, in the Desert Botanical Garden and Papago Park. Common Nighthawks are locally common in summer, not in the Valley, but at higher elevations throughout the state primarily in grasslands near the foothills of our mountain ranges.

B) Good photo, difficult bird

All the goatsuckers are difficult when seen roosting because their camouflage plumage is largely devoid of distinguishing characteristics. One exception is that nighthawks at rest often show their white wingbar and a distinctive white feather at the bend of the wing. We can see neither on this second quiz bird, but sometimes neither is visible even on nightjars depending on the angle of view and way the bird has arranged its feathers. Nightjars, however, have much longer tails and primary extensions than the bird in this photo, so this must be one of our nightjars.

This appears to be a small, plump nightjar with an attenuated profile, an impression reinforced by its very short wings and tail and its relatively huge head. Geography alone eliminates Common Pauraque and Chuck-will's-widow but jizz, if not size, should preclude both of those anyway. Pauraque's exceptionally long tail is nearly the same length as its entire body, and Chucks, our largest nightjars, also have proportionately longer tails than this bird, tails which extend noticeably beyond the primary tips, whereas our quiz bird's primary tips extend to the very end of its short tail.

Common Poorwill is our smallest nightjar, under eight inches in length, and the shape of our second bird should lead us in that direction, but is there any way to eliminate the remaining two nightjars, Buff-collared and Whip-poor-will? The buff collar separating the nape and back of Buff-collared Nightjar, though buff rather than white, would be readily visible in a close-up photo such as this, but this bird shows no

break or collar line in its cryptic plumage. Whips, two inches longer than poorwills, and with longer tails which extend, like those of Chucks, well past the wingtips, also show a distinctive row of gray feathers running horizontally along the scapulars and onto the back. Our quiz bird shows no such patterning.

This Common Poorwill was photographed after dark in Madera Canyon in April, 2007, untypically seen before it was heard calling. Typically our night jars do not call until after dark, and evidence of a nighttime photo shot with flash lies in the shadow to the right of the bird. Poorwills are the least distinctly patterned of all our goatsuckers, but have the most distinct shape. You've heard it countless times before, right? Shape and structure are more diagnostic than color.

C) Good photo, difficult bird

Often in our photo quizzes, discussion of the first two photos gives us a good start toward identifying the third. In this case, however, this full frontal close-up of our third quiz bird gives us two very good diagnostic plumage features which should lead us to its proper identification even without the processes of elimination which we've done on the first two. Indeed, this may be the easiest of our seven goatsuckers to identify by plumage only when seen at rest, without having to account for shape and structure.

The things which stand out in this photo are the bold, dark median crown stripe and the row of light feathers extending back along the shoulders from the light breast. These are plumage features characteristic of Whip-poor-wills, unshared by any other North American member of this family. Our nighthawks have a much more distinctive horizontal striping across the lower breast and belly. Chuck-will's-widow, closest in size and plumage to our Whips, have dark crown streaks but never a solid stripe such as we see here, and Chucks' shoulder markings are more muted and much less obvious. This Whip was photographed in the Huachuca Mountains in May, 2006.

If you're into the mysteries and challenges of finding and identifying owls, our goatsuckers should provide you with a similarly tantalizing experience. Their booming voices, heard much more frequently than their owl relatives, always give away their presence, but pinpointing location can be an exercise in frustration. Looking for goatsuckers, though, is a great excuse for being outdoors in Arizona in the state's most beautiful habitat during the best time of the year.

Review: Carrol L. Henderson's, *Birds in Flight: The Art and Science of How Birds Fly*

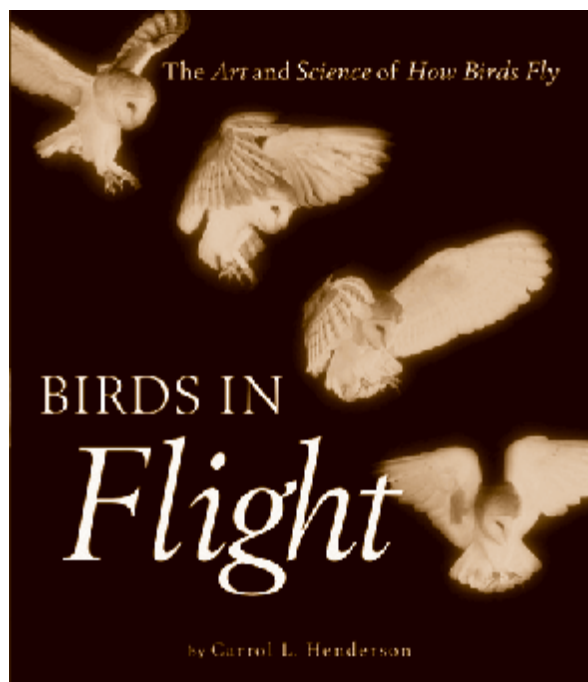
Deva Burns

Carrol Henderson is a nature photographer, writer, and wildlife biologist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. His photography has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Audubon* and *Birder's World*.

Most of us at one time or another have marveled about the flight of birds. Many of us wish that we, too, could take to the air on our own. Henderson's book takes that flight, so to speak, and breaks it into its component parts and defines those parts in extensive detail.

He explains how the shape and size of the wing determines not only the type of flight but also the habitat and behavior for which it evolved. He gets into the aspect ratio of the wings and why it is important. He describes the various types of feathers and their functions—primary, secondary, scapular, down, contour and tail, and he shows readers how birds actually attain lift-off.

This is a book which will especially appeal to those interested in the physics behind the beauty and grace which we as birders admire and to which we ourselves aspire.



For more information please go to http://www.voyageurpress.com/Store/ProductDetails_40631.ncm

Carefree Christmas Bird Count Summary

Walter Thurber, Compiler

JANUARY 2, 2009

The 17th annual Carefree Christmas Bird Count was held on Friday, January 2, 2009. Some 74 field observers and 9 feeder watchers teamed up to find 104 species and 12,468 individual birds. Later we gathered at the El Encanto Mexican Restaurant in Cave Creek for our compilation dinner.

This was a big year for woodpeckers. All four North American sapsuckers were present—a Red-breasted Sapsucker at Lower Camp Creek, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Upper Camp Creek, a Williamson's Sapsucker along the trail west of

Seven Springs and the usual Red-naped Sapsuckers. The Red-breasted and Williamson's sapsuckers were new species for our all time count list. We had record high numbers of Gila Woodpeckers, Red-naped Sapsuckers and Northern Flickers.

Also new to our count list were a Common Merganser at Desert Mountain, three Black-crowned Night-Herons at Dove Valley Ranch and a Eurasian Collared-Dove at the Jewel of the Creek Preserve. Our cumulative count list now totals 163 species. Some other highlights include a Barn Owl at the Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area and two Townsend's Warblers at Lower Camp

Creek. Ours was the only Arizona count reporting Fox Sparrow.

Gambel's Quail was once again our most abundant bird, followed by White-crowned Sparrow, Mourning Dove, House Finch and Black-throated Sparrow. Last year Carefree had the national high count for Gambel's Quail and Cactus Wren.

Our area leaders were Harvey Beatty, Diane Berney, Greg Clark, Troy Corman, Tara Deck, Cynthia Donald, Herb Fibel, Grant Loomis and Tice Supplee. Maricopa Audubon members participated in the count and I am grateful for your support.

Great Backyard Bird Count Highlights Dynamic Changes in Where the Birds Are



12TH ANNUAL GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT



BIRD WATCHERS BREAK RECORD FOR FIFTH STRAIGHT YEAR.

New York, NY & Ithaca, NY—The 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC) featured two invasions this year: voracious Pine Siskins (pictured right) and a whole new crop of citizen-science participants! Bird watchers shattered last year's record by submitting **more than 93,600 checklists** during the four-day event, held February 16-19. Participants also identified 619 species and sent in thousands of stunning bird images for the GBBC photo contest. The Great Backyard Bird Count is led by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society.

"Each year the GBBC provides the most detailed real-time snapshot of bird distribution across North America," said Rob Fergus, Senior Scientist with the National Audubon Society. "We can see how birds are responding to changing weather patterns, available food sources, and other factors from around the continent."

One of the big stories coming from the GBBC this year was the massive invasion of Pine Siskins and White-Winged Crossbills over much of the eastern United States. These feisty little birds moved southward because of seed crop failures in their usual wintering grounds in Canada and the

boreal forests. GBBC participants reported 279,469 Pine Siskins on 18,528 checklists, compared to the previous high of 38,977 birds on 4,069 checklists in 2005. White-winged Crossbills were not as common, but their invasion was still impressive with 4,824 birds on 589 checklists representing a new record over the previous high of 2,854 birds on 135 checklists in 2007.

The GBBC continues to show declines in some common birds, especially grassland and shrubland species. Loggerhead Shrike numbers are down, and although numbers of Northern Bobwhites and Eastern Meadowlarks were both up slightly from last year, they are still being reported in fewer numbers during the GBBC than they were in 2004. These GBBC trends are only preliminary views of what may be going on with these populations, and they must continue to be monitored to get a true long-term view of how these birds are faring.

Species reported for the first time during the Great Backyard Bird Count included two oceanic species—Pink-footed Shearwater and Xantus's Murrelet, both in California. Other first-timers included Baird's Sandpiper, Black-billed Cuckoo, and Blackpoll Warbler. Two rare Mexican species appeared on GBBC checklists from Arizona for the first time: the first Sinaloa Wren ever

found north of the border, and a Blue Mockingbird.

"I just love the way this event opens up a new world for so many people," says Cornell Lab of Ornithology Citizen Science Director Janis Dickinson. "We have grandparents counting with their grandchildren, elementary school classrooms doing the GBBC as a special project, nature centers taking visitors out on bird walks. And adults who never noticed birds before are suddenly smitten!"

For a more detailed summary of this year's results, visit the GBBC web site at www.birdcount.org. Explore 2009 data, compare with other years, and find the exact counts for each species in a particular state, province, or town.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is sponsored by Wild Birds Unlimited.

The next Great Backyard Bird Count is February 15-18, 2010!

Top 10 most-frequently reported birds in the 2009 GBBC:

- 1) Northern Cardinal
- 2) Mourning Dove
- 3) Dark-eyed Junco
- 4) American Goldfinch
- 5) Downy Woodpecker
- 6) Blue Jay
- 7) House Finch
- 8) Tufted Titmouse
- 9) American Crow
- 10) Black-capped Chickadee

Visit the "Explore the Results" pages on the GBBC web site at www.birdcount.org to find the list of Top 10 birds reported in your state, province, or city.

Maricopa Audubon Society

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miscellaneous

Monthly Meetings—*November meeting is canceled*

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

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

Membership Information

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

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

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

Submissions

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

Opinions

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

Reprinting of material

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

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