



The Cactus Wren·dition



Volume LXIV, No. 2

Summer 2012



Black-necked Stilts

Photo by Rich Ditch

Programs Summer 2012

Tuesday, September 4, 2012

Devil's Canyon Bob Witzeman

Both panoramic and intimate views of one of Arizona's most ecologically diverse and stunningly beautiful riparian treasures will be presented. This Sonoran Desert treasure, Devil's Canyon near Superior, Arizona, may be obliterated by a proposed copper mine. It would create a gigantic hole a mile across and as deep as the Empire State Building is high. We



will see stunning views of canyon walls, rock formations, native cacti, flowers, birds, mammals, reptiles, butterflies and dragonflies found here. The canyon's ecologically unique assemblage of cottonwood, willow, ash, alder, walnut, and sycamore trees will also be highlighted.

Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

Tuesday, October 2, 2012

Australia: Life on the Outback David and Diane Reesor

Bullo Station, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide, the Margaret River wineries and Kangaroo Island are some of



the locations the Reesors visited in Australia. They stayed a week with an aboriginal family to experience life on the outback.

Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden

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I'm very concerned for the future of the earth and its amazing creatures. We've got to be careful and make sure we don't foul our own nest.
— John Lithgow

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.



On the cover: Black-necked Stilts by Rich Ditch
Exposure information: f/11.00, 1/319 sec., ISO: 200, Focal Length: 600mm

President's Message

by Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

As warmer days return we are reminded that heat is our defining weather in the Sonoran Desert. Some of us flee the heat, while others revel in it. Regardless of the weather, we will be busy this summer planning more programs and activities for the coming year.

I expect that our monthly meetings will be more packed with useful information that can improve the quality of our members' lives. And, I foresee a future with a concentration of activities aimed at families and children who, after all, represent the future of our planet.

We need to connect more people, young and old, with the natural world. When was the last time that you helped to open a child's eyes to the wonders of Nature? What MAS field trip has been your favorite in the past year? If you haven't participated in a field trip, you are missing some great opportunities to learn about our region, our birds, and our people. We even have field trips about other fascinating life, such as dragonflies and bats!

As you know, Maricopa Audubon Society has long been focused on conservation issues and that will not change. What we need, though, are more members involved in our conservation efforts.

Your Board of Directors will be developing both short- and long-term plans to manage our resources. I welcome suggestions from members—What are your ideas for building a better chapter? 🐦

New Challenges in Environmental Education

by Emily Morris, Editor

It definitely says something about how privileged my life has been that two months ago I had to make one of the hardest decisions of my life. As many of you know, I loved working with Audubon Arizona at the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center in South Phoenix; but, when my friend who worked at the Desert Botanical Garden let me know that she was moving out of state and that I should apply for her position, I decided it was something that I had to try for.

I am happy to say that I was offered and then accepted the position as an Education Coordinator at the Garden, though it has been hard to tear myself away from the Audubon Center's programs. It is lucky that Audubon was able to offer my position to Lindsey Hendricks, who made it much easier for me to let go, as I know she is already doing a fabulous job.

At the Garden, I am in charge of the homeschool and summer camp programs and will be taking charge of the Sammy Seedlings pre-school program in the fall.



The Garden is so much larger than Audubon Arizona that it has been a challenge to get to know everyone and figure out where I fit in. The Education Department has been so helpful in this regard, very aware that it will have to be a steep learning curve.

It is great to walk into the Garden every morning, as I'm sure you can imagine! I feel so lucky that I have had the chance to work with both Audubon Arizona and the Botanical Garden. It has been a crazy two months, but I finally feel that I'm settling in to my new position. Someone at the Garden said jokingly to me recently, "So, are you going to switch from a bird person to a plant person now that you work here?" I told her that was VERY unlikely! 🐦

Notes & Announcements

Flagged Shorebirds

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

Unwanted Catalogs

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

E-Newsletter

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

Birding Community E-Bulletin

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

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge – Belize

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

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

Land of the Quetzal

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

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

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

Theo Chocolate is the first organic and fair trade certified bean-to-bar chocolate maker in the United States. Theo produces "origin" chocolates, which are identified by the cacao's growing region. Costa Rica was selected as the

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

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

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

For Rent in Costa Rica

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

Book Store Selections

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

Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)

Check out their website for events around the state—www.azwildlife.com

Museum of Northern Arizona

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

Environmental Fund

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

The Dovetail Directory

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

Shade-grown Coffee

If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird

Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade-grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade-grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade-grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co—www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491. And another from Kenn Kaufman is www.birdsandbeans.com

More Birding and Nature Festivals

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

SUBMISSIONS

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

AZ Field Ornithologists Meeting

The sixth annual meeting of Arizona Field Ornithologists will be held in Lake Havasu City the weekend of October 26 – 28. There will be field trips on Friday and Sunday and presentations on Saturday on changing bird status and field research in Arizona. The meeting will honor Gale Monson who passed away February 19, 2012. For more details please visit the AZFO website: azfo.org

Gale Monson

August 1, 1912 – February 19, 2012

Gale was best known as a co-author of *The Birds of Arizona*, *The Birds of Sonora*, as well as the editor of the *Southwest Region for N. American Birds* from 1948 until 1963 and again from 1971-73. His family has asked that contributions in his memory be made to the Arizona Field Ornithologists "Gale

Monson Research Grant Program" c/o AZFO Treasurer. Doug Jenness, 4375 E. Rollins Rd., Tucson, AZ 85739.



The North American Bluebird Society 35th Annual Bluebird Conference in Newport Beach, CA.
October 4th-6th, 2012

The Southern California Bluebird Club is hosting this family-friendly event at The Radisson Hotel in Newport Beach, directly across from the John Wayne Airport! Members have planned an exciting and entertaining conservation-focused agenda for participants. Laura Erickson from Cornell University will be the keynote speaker; her topic, How Birds Learn, and her workshop, 101 Ways to Help Birds. Other highlights include a hero of conservation, Steve Simmons from Merced, CA. Steve will be talking about his many years of banding experience, his 800 nest boxes for cavity-nesting species and showing his menagerie of ingenious tools to outwit and safely trap birds. From Colorado, Andrew Mackie, Executive Director of the Land Trust of the Upper Arkansas, will talk about the status of Mountain Bluebird, and from Oregon, naturalist, Steve Shunk, will enlighten guests about how woodpeckers are keystone species for cavity nesting birds. Additional information on workshops and field trips with registration information is now available via Southern California Bluebird Club www.socalbluebirds.org and NABS www.nabluebirdsociety.org websites. Check out their promo video on YouTube: http://youtu.be/CS2_jMQwqd0

REGISTER BEFORE JUNE 1ST FOR A \$10 DISCOUNT

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

by Mike Plagens

Saturday, June 2

High Elevations in Maricopa County—Mount Ord

In early June, there should still be some breeding birds active on Mt. Ord. We will get an early start in hopes of catching a lot of bird activity once we reach the Ponderosa Pine forest. Some of the birds that regularly breed in this habitat include Band-tailed Pigeon, Painted Redstart, Olive Warbler, Spotted Towhee, Hutton's Vireo, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, and Grace's Warbler. In the deciduous Gambel's Oaks we might see Greater Pewee, Plumbeous Vireo, Hepatic Tanager, or White-breasted Nuthatch. There will be some walking at altitude—Mt. Ord is just less than 7,000 feet above sea level—but the trails are all easy. Bring water, a snack, and a hiking staff if you have one. Be prepared for temperatures at least 20 degrees cooler than here in the Valley. Limit 6.

Leader: Mark Larson (info & reservations: larsonwarren@gmail.com (480) 474-4439)

Saturday, June 2

Early Bird Nature Walk

The habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of wildlife, especially birds and insects. Join a naturalist for a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. Bring binoculars, water, good walking shoes, and a hat. The walks are not fast-paced and the terrain is easy. There is a suggested \$5 donation to the EEC. Registration is NOT required, but large groups must call in advance: 480-782-2890. All participants under 15 must be accompanied by an adult. Location: Environmental Education Center. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. 7:30 to 9 am starting at the Red-tailed Hawk Pavilion.

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

Friday, June 15

Christopher Creek

We'll start about 5:15 from Fountain Hills, head to a little-known but friendly

subdivision in the Christopher Creek area where birding has always been good, then explore the camping area and the town of Christopher Creek for resident high elevation birds (woodpeckers and nuthatches, etc.) and colorful migrants (Black-headed Grosbeaks, tanagers and warblers). Small entrance fee to the campground. Please pack a lunch. We'll return to Fountain Hills about 1:00 pm. Limit 8. Reservations required. Difficulty 1-2. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip.

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

Wednesday-Thursday, June 20 – 21

Jones Water and Haystack Butte

Late June tends to be quite hot so this trip will begin very early on the Summer Solstice – before 5am departing from Mesa for the area northeast of Globe off US 60. We will bird along Jones Water and in the open oak woodlands of this area above the Salt River Canyon. Along the way we'll see plants, butterflies, insects and other creatures. For those so inclined we'll camp overnight under a near new moon. We will arrange carpooling such that day trippers can return on Wednesday or else use a motel in Globe. USFS sometimes restricts access at this time of year so we will adjust as necessary. Difficulty 2.

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

Wednesday, July 11

Dragonfly Discovery Walk

Join a naturalist for a guided walk to observe dragonflies and damselflies buzzing about the desert and wetland habitats at Veterans Oasis Park! Bring binoculars, water, good walking shoes, and a hat. The walks are not fast-paced and the terrain is easy. There is a suggested \$5 donation to the EEC. Registration is NOT required, but large groups must call in advance: 480-782-2890. All participants under 15 must be accompanied by an adult. Dragonfly coloring books (\$7) and field guides (\$10) will be available for sale. Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast

corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. 7:30 to 9 am starting at the Red-Tailed Hawk Pavilion.

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

Wednesday-Thursday, July 18-19

Upper East Verde River: Two days including sleep over at Mel's cabin (bring your sleeping bag) in the lush pines and riparian woodlands above Payson. Begin 7:00 am Wednesday from Phoenix area by carpool. By afternoon we will convene at Mel's above Houston Mesa where we will find plenty of floor space. Bring and share foods for supper and breakfast. On Thursday morning we can bird stretches of the East Verde River or go over to Tonto Natural Bridge. We will look for wildflowers, trees and shrubs and insect life. Difficulty 2+

Leader: Mel Bramley. Contact mjplagens@arizonensis.org or 602-459-5224 for details, directions & reservations. Limit 10 persons.

Sunday, July 22-24

White Mountains

The target destination is Hannigan Meadow Lodge, but failing that (depending on availability), we'll stay somewhere in the White Mountains and see what might be coming back after last year's disastrous fire. This area needs our tourist dollars, and there's bound be some good spots left! We'll leave early on Sunday morning, bird on the way to the White Mountains, check out the multiple areas highlighted in AZ's Wildlife Viewing Guide, visit what's coming back in Greer, and head back to arrive by dinner on Tuesday. While previous experience indicates this does not include strenuous hikes, the elevations can top 9,000'. Limit 8.

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

Wednesday, Aug 1

Dragonfly Discovery Walk

See description from **July 11**.

Veterans Oasis Park is on the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rds. 7:30am to 9 am starting at the Red-

Tailed Hawk Pavilion.

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

Saturday, Aug 11

Sunflower and Sycamore Creek

As it will still be very hot, we will have to start very early! Leave 5:15 AM from Denny's in Fountain Hills with stops at Mesquite Wash, and other points along Sycamore Creek as far as Sunflower. Finish before 11:00 am. Limit 8. Reservations required. Difficulty 1

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

Monday, August 27

Salt River

I'm hoping to catch the summer abundance of colorful neotropical migrants still hanging around, plus whatever early birds are headed south.



A wonderful day of fresh air, plenty of birds, and spring flowers was had by 12 participants in the Feb. 29th hike into Haunted Canyon.

Haunted Canyon, Superstition Mountains, February 29, 2012 by Mike Plagens

A chilly morning greeted more than a dozen nature watchers when we began our hike along Pinto Creek south towards its confluence with Haunted Canyon creek. White frost coated grass and exposed rocks, but calling Spotted Towhees and Northern Cardinals were wide awake. The best bird was one

Regular desert birds and a bald eagle are very reliable. Hard to have a bad day at the Salt River! Start about 6:15. Finish up about 10, before it gets too hot. Easy. Limit 8.

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

Saturday, September 1

Mt. Ord in Late Summer

This trip will repeat the trip of June 2 in an attempt to compare the bird species present three months apart. Some of the species that might have been common in June may have departed, replaced by early migrants. We may also see birds of the year feeding with their parents or in mixed flocks. In addition to the notes for the June trip, be prepared for monsoon weather, although we will try to get off the mountain before any big storm hits. Limit 6.

Leader: Mark Larson (info & reservations: larsonwarren@gmail.com (480) 474-4439)

that had many of us fooled. It was a raptor perched atop a tree about a kilometer away. All we could make out was an abundance of golden rufous plumage – we wanted to call it a Golden Eagle. It didn't help that reports of Golden Eagle from this spot were on the Listserv in the prior week. Not until it took flight a good 20 minutes later did we all see the red tail of this

rufous morph Red-tailed Hawk. We also saw at least seven Townsend's Solitaire and many dozen American Robins. They were feeding on the few remaining berries of Red-berry Juniper.

Northsight Park, Scottsdale, March 24, 2012 by Brian Ison

It was too early in the season for a lot of migratory birds, but we had good

Friday, September 14

Madera Canyon

We'll start very early, 4:30ish, to get to Madera Canyon and hope to see whatever hummingbirds are still hanging around there, as well as Arizona Woodpeckers, turkeys, nuthatches and other treasures that populate the Canyon in September. We'll explore the grasslands on the way in, make obligatory stops at Kubo's and Santa Rita Lodge to see what's showing up there, and hike a bit at the end of the road to see if we can hear/see the Elegant Trogon. Some reasonable entrance fees required. This is a long day; we'll get back to the Phoenix area about 6:00 pm. There's definitely some uphill hiking on this, and some uneven footing, but believe me, we'll take it slow! Limit 8.

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

Field Trip Reports

looks at a Gray Flycatcher, Bronzed Cowbird, singing Yellow-rumped Warbler (Audubon's), and a flyover Western Kingbird. A Lucy's Warbler coming down to the standing water on the south side of the park was a nice surprise. Also had a few Northern Rough-winged Swallows. The day before, March 23, I had an "Oregon" and "Pink-sided" Junco and an Ash-throated Flycatcher. Northsight Park can be reached by driving north on 84th St. from Cactus Rd. in Scottsdale.

Saturday, February 25, 2012 by Richard Kaiser

The Lower Salt River, being not far from northeast Mesa, has become quite a productive birding area, and is a long-standing favorite field trip for Maricopa Audubon. The ten-mile drive between Granite Reef Dam and Saguaro Lake along the Bush Highway customarily

Field Trip Reports

forms a trip list of at least 50 species of birds. On this day, the morning started out chilly and with a light wind, but by mid-morning, as is typical for our desert, the breeze had subsided and warmth had set in.

Our first stop is at the ponds at Red Mountain Ranch, essentially used as a preview or introduction of birds and places to come. Between two ponds, we saw Ring-necked Ducks, American Coots, Ruddy Ducks, and, in the glare of the sun, one Redhead. Next, along Granite Reef Dam Road, a few of us saw a couple of Black-throated Sparrows in the desert; from an overlook of the dam, some Northern Rough-winged Swallows darted around us, by the distant water were Mallards, Least Sandpipers, and a Great Egret. Flying over the riverbed were our first Common Mergansers of the day, and returning to Bush Highway, one Bald Eagle was seen in flight.

One of the better stops along this route is in the Granite Reef Recreational Area, officially within the Tonto National Forest. In the treed picnic area, we identified Gray Flycatcher, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, and Verdin. In the reeds along the shore, what we hoped were "better" species of sparrows, were "just" House Sparrows. But in the river were our most exciting finds and views: Gadwalls, more Common Mergansers, Redheads, Cinnamon Teals, Bufflehead (the frequent confusion with Hooded Merganser), Common Goldeneye (even a beautiful view of its yellow eye!), and

Canvasback. In flight, we heard and saw two Canada Geese, and one each of Belted Kingfisher and Green Heron. Another view of the river is from a path from an unmarked parking area, our next stop north. It was from here that I promised Canvasback and Common Gallinule (previously known as Moorhen), and indeed, we had sightings of these species, as I did the previous week in



Lower Salt River
Photo by Mark Larson

a scouting trip. Gallinules tend to be reliably seen here. We also identified a Ladder-backed Woodpecker along the path, the source of an unusual call.

Phon D. Sutton Recreational Area is the site of the confluence of the Salt and Verde Rivers. We searched for a Bald Eagle or its nest, seen in the past here, but were unsuccessful today. The best we could muster was an Anna's Hummingbird, and, in the desert bushes, a couple of Canyon Towhees.

The next recreational area is Coon Bluff, and even when busy with campers and mountain rappellers, the bird sightings can be great. A Spotted Sandpiper was observed on the rocks in the river from the overlook, but the highlights had to be a bright Vermilion Flycatcher, and two even more colorful Western Bluebirds. More common species here included Red-winged Blackbird, Phainopepla, Northern Flicker,

Great-tailed Grackle, and, as we were leaving, overhead, at least one Red-tailed Hawk.

Our last stops were from different viewpoints of Saguaro Lake. Driving, and then walking, along the side of the lake, we saw some American Coots, Pied-billed Grebes, and several gulls that tested our ID skills, but were the common (for Arizona) Ring-billed species. Beyond our vision capabilities, we could only make out hundreds of Aechmophorus (Western/Clark's) Grebes out in front of Stewart Mountain Dam. From beyond the last picnic table, we studied one bird for a while that swam by the rocks near the shore. The consensus of our views could only make out this bird to be an Eared Grebe, but still a new species for the day. Only four of us continued on to Butcher Jones beach. Out on the water, we saw Ring-necked Ducks, American Coots, Ruddy Ducks, and Pied-billed Grebes, but most intriguing were two ducks that we identified as scaup. Lesser Scaup are the more common species in Arizona and at this time of year, and these two birds remained close to each other, but size, color and shape of head, and bill length all contributed to our consideration that we may have seen one of each type (Greater and Lesser) of scaup.

The best sightings, though, were yet to come. From the road, near our parking spot, two beautiful adult Bald Eagles circled over us. Then, one bird that flew across our vision to a tree turned out to be an American Robin! Finally, having left the Butcher Jones area and Saguaro Lake, driving down the Bush Highway back towards Mesa, we spotted two Harris' Hawks on cacti. I was happy, as sightings of this species have dropped drastically since years ago along this route.

Our bird list totaled 58 species. This was another exciting trip along the Lower Salt River. Be on the participant list for next time! 🐦

Who Was Jerod (Jerry) Hughes?

by Herb Fibel

Maricopa Audubon was recently a benefactor of a trust set up by Jerod Floyd Hughes. I didn't have the pleasure of knowing this generous soul and curiosity got the best of me, so I decided to try to find out who he was.

The first thing we know via the trust is that he left half his money to the Maricopa Audubon Society and the other half to the Phoenix Zoo.

Whether Mr. Hughes was into birding

and/or habitat conservation, or both, we may never know. If you knew Jerry, please get in touch with me, and I'll be happy to write a follow-up article on this generous gentleman.

The following is all I was able to find about him: Sadly, his obituaries were quite short. Jerod was 75 years old and for many years a widower when he passed away on September 21, 2005. His wife, Beverly, passed away twelve years earlier, and they had no

children. He lived in Sun City when he died and was retired from the position of Vice President and General Manager of Childress Buick. He was born in Mankato, Minnesota. As far as I can determine, Childress Buick is no longer in business.

Wherever you are and whoever you were, Jerry, we are deeply grateful to you for making Maricopa Audubon one of your beneficiaries. 🐦

Sparrow Workshop Dubbed a Huge Success

by Herb Fibel

Building on Maricopa Audubon's desire to promote environmental education within the community, board members were very pleased with the addition of the first annual Sparrow Workshop and Field Trip. The venture was a huge success, thanks to our presenter, Tom Gaskill, and activity coordinator, program chairperson and board member Laurie Nessel.

The workshop was held on a Saturday afternoon at the end of March, at the Franciscan Renewal Center on Lincoln Drive in Scottsdale. In his two hour presentation Tom reviewed every sparrow species in the U.S.; he also discussed the close relatives of sparrows-- towhees, longspurs, and finches. His objective was to teach us how to identify these pesky "little brown jobs" or LBJs without having to solely rely on the all-too-confusing identification features set out in our field guides. He told his enraptured birder audience that the simpler and more reliable way was to use body structure, habitat, location, song, and habits



Photo by Ritch Ditch

to separate one species from another.

The birders who participated in the field trip the following day were able to put into practice what Tom had taught us. We checked out Granite Reef Recreation Area, Coon Bluff, Butcher Jones Beach, and the area where the Beeline Highway and the Bush Highway converge. Unfortunately, a gusty wind kept down the sparrow diversity, but other species were not ignored; a large number of other colorful bird species, including Northern Cardinal, Vermilion Flycatcher, Anna's Hummingbird, Gray Flycatcher, Bullock's Oriole, and Canyon Towhee were spotted. Chapter president Mark Larson even was able to share some of his extensive

knowledge about desert plants.

The most compelling aspect of this activity, in this writer's opinion, was that many people who had not previously participated in a MAS event took part! 🐦

Design Solutions Inspired by the Natural World

by Gillian Rice

"Biomimicry is the conscious emulation of life's genius," explains Megan Schuknecht, Director of University Education & Relations for the Montana-based Biomimicry 3.8 Institute. "Humans are a young species in a world where nature has evolved for over three billion years. We know that organisms optimize instead of maximize. Biomimicry is the practice of adapting nature's best ideas to the invention of healthier, more sustainable technologies for people."

Beetle Bumps Help to Capture Clean Water

How can a beetle from Africa help people living in a remote region of Arizona obtain clean drinking water? In the vast, arid Navajo reservation, people must travel to communal wells and transport water in large containers. Could their daily lives be made easier?

The Namibian Beetle (*Stenocara gracilipes*) has a secret to share. It knows how to survive in one of the driest deserts in the world, the Namib, on the southwest coast of Africa. The beetle uses the unique surface of its back to obtain all of the water it needs from ocean fog. Microscopic bumps with hydrophilic (water attracting) tips and hydrophobic (water repelling) sides cover its hardened forewings, which it aims at oncoming fog each morning. Water droplets materialize out of thin air on its back, build up on the bumps, and then



slide down channels into the beetle's waiting mouth. A student team at ASU's InnovationSpace used the beetle's secret to create a product with panels that are partly hydrophilic and partly hydrophobic.

Using nanotechnology (the manipulation of materials at the molecular level), the team designed the Everwell product concept, with panels to attract moisture and channel it down. The product concept is for use in the home, to collect drinking water from the air.

The beetle has inspired others: British defense research firm, Qinetiq, designed a patchwork surface coating that mimics the water-attracting bumps and water-shedding valleys of the beetle's back. The surface coating can capture water vapor

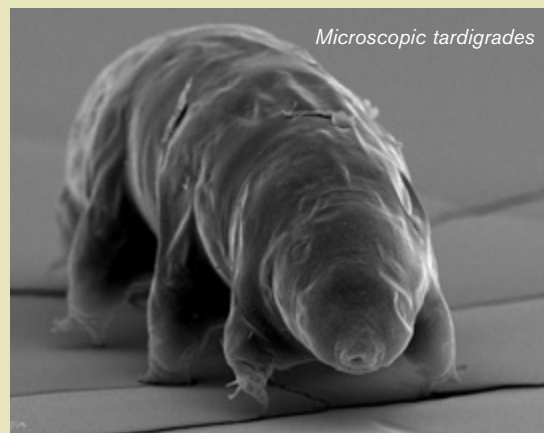
“Another student wondered if cumbersome backpacks could be redesigned to hang more efficiently from the human body in the way that sloths hung from the trees. She studied the musculoskeletal scaffolding of sloths and produced a brilliant redesign of the backpack.”

from cooling towers, for example, and can move moisture off surfaces quickly.

Biomimicry in Academia

"At InnovationSpace, students learn biology-inspired design methods," says Adelheid Fischer, manager of InnovationSpace, a product development initiative. "The goal is to learn from nature's strategies." The Inuit have long looked to polar bears and their dens to develop shelter solutions. Leonardo da Vinci gleaned ideas from nature. In the early 1700s, after observing paper wasps, French scientist René de Réaumur suggested that people could make paper from wood fiber instead of cotton or linen rags. History is full of examples of what we now call 'biomimicry.'

Says Fischer: "Janine Benyus, author of *Biomimicry*, captures the essence of this approach perfectly with her observation: 'Failures are fossils.'"



Fischer explains that the biology-inspired design projects students must complete are transdisciplinary: "InnovationSpace's biomimicry initiative introduces students to the use of biology as a means of sustainable innovation in design, business and engineering. We have partnered with the Biomimicry Institute to integrate biomimicry into our curriculum."

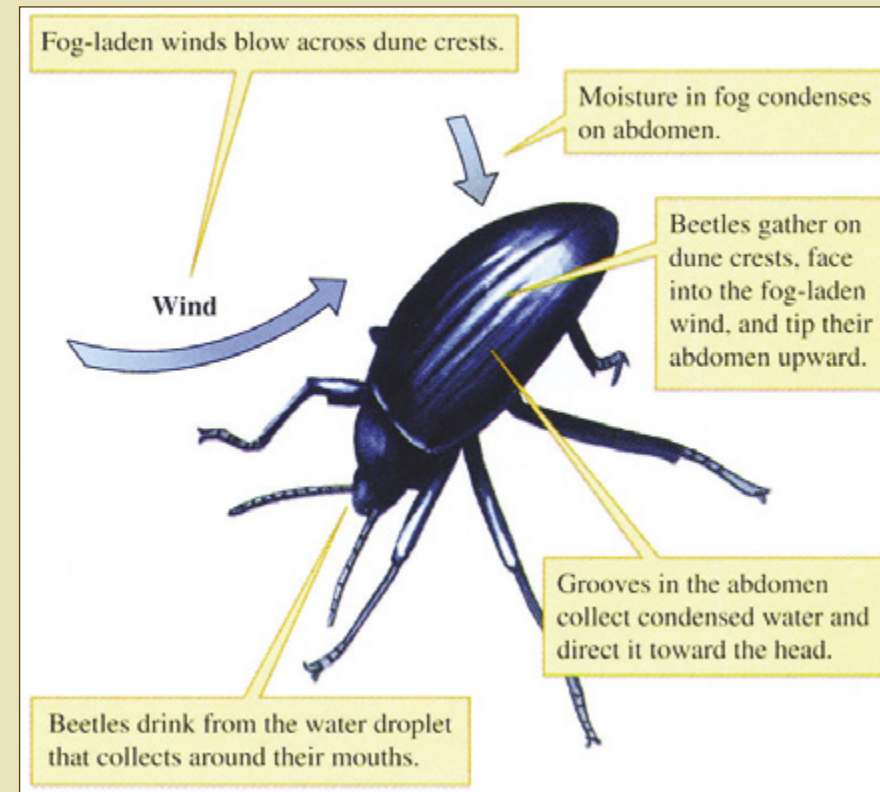
"Each year, graduate students from architecture, biology, and product design go to Panama for a 12 day traveling studio," relates Fischer. "They are joined by a couple of biology Ph.D. students.

They stay in the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, have guided tours of the rainforest, study urbanization in Panama City, and learn about the Panama Canal."

Student Innovation from Bat Wings and Sloth Arms

When the students return, they exhibit their nature-inspired design projects in ASU's School of Life Sciences and the Design School. One student in the traveling studio produced an umbrella that doesn't blow inside out – inspired by bat wings.

"Another student wondered if cumbersome backpacks could be redesigned to hang more efficiently from the human body in the way that sloths hung from the trees. She studied the musculoskeletal scaffolding of sloths and produced a brilliant redesign of the backpack," adds Fischer.



Spider Webs and Bird Strikes

Schuknecht distinguishes between biomimicry solutions in three areas: form, process, and the ecosystem. For example, orb-weaving spiders have UV reflective properties in the silk used to weave their webs. Birds can see light in the UV range. UV reflectance in a web alerts birds to its presence. They don't crash into it and don't destroy the spider's work and its ability to capture

prey. German manufacturer, Arnold Glas, used this knowledge and mimicked form to develop ORNILUX Bird Protection Glass. The human eye does not perceive UV light so Arnold Glas invented a UV reflective, but transparent, glass that works on the same principle as the orb weaver's web. The innovative solution prevents bird window collisions,



balancing visibility to birds and transparency to us.

Back to Life for Preserved Vaccines

Microscopic tardigrades (a group of tiny eight-legged animals that are commonly known as water bears or moss piglets)

wander about their moss, lichen, or leaf-litter habitat. When this habitat dries up, they enter a process of cryptobiosis (when an animal stops all metabolic procedures in response to adverse environmental

conditions) and live in a desiccated state of suspended animation and wait, sometimes for decades, for hospitable conditions when they can return to life. Scientists mimicked the tardigrade's cryptobiotic process to develop a technology to preserve vaccines, which need a "cold chain" for distribution. The dry vaccine is suspended in an inert liquid

and transported to remote, hot places without a cold chain, protected from bacterial contamination.

Dung Disposal

In healthy ecosystems, no waste exists. Every material is an input for something else. The dung beetle provides an ecosystem service. During parts of the year in India, dung beetles bury an estimated forty to fifty thousand tons of human excrement each day. Investigation of how fecal digestion enzymes work can help in the design of efficient waste management.

The interdisciplinary field of biomimicry reconnects people with nature.

"Biomimicry is optimistic," declares Schuknecht. "Unlike the doom and gloom scenarios about the end of the world and the environmental mess we are in, biomimicry promotes inquisitive thinking and tinkering." 🐞

FURTHER BIOMIMICRY RESOURCES

www.asknature.org

An open source project of the Biomimicry Institute and an online inspiration source for the biomimicry community. Read how kingfishers inspired a redesign of Japan's bullet train.

Benyus, Janine M. 1997 *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature*. Harper Perennial.

Fischer, Adelheid. 2012. "Shaking Hands with a Sloth!" Online at <http://places.designobserver.com/feature/biomimicry-and-design-education/32848/>

Holbrook, C. Tate and colleagues. 2010. "Social Insects Inspire Human Design." *Biology Letters*. Online at <http://rsbl.royalsocietypublishing.org/content/6/4/431.full.pdf>

To learn about the city of Lavasa, India--a planned hill city in a rainforest area built around biomimicry principles, go to www.lavasa.com.

Butterfly Coloration

by Brett Seymoure

Animal coloration is a matter of life and death. Although most people think of animal coloration as a means of blending in with the environment to avoid becoming another animal's meal, coloration in animals is vast and fulfills many more functions than just camouflage. Most animals use coloration to maintain body temperature as well as to signal to possible mates and rivals. And then there is the coloration that you use

almost on a daily basis to recognize if an animal may be harmful or not. Think of the last time to you saw a black and yellow insect flying towards you, you most likely paid very close attention to this critter and

behavior of these colors is learned, while others are innate. We are not the only species to utilize these warning colors and most people are familiar with the function of the bright orange coloration of monarch and queen butterflies. These

butterflies are not signaling to us to avoid them, but instead to hungry birds who are looking for an easy

meal. If a bird neglects the butterfly's warning, in just a few minutes the bird will begin to vomit from the monarch's toxins. And, most likely the next time that bird sees a monarch it will just keep flying.

At the Rutowski lab at Arizona State University, we study these warning colors in butterflies. Perhaps you have seen the blue and orange pipevine swallowtail that resides here in Phoenix. These colors are advertising toxins that the butterfly is able to sequester from its host plant (the plant that the larvae eat before



Orange Tiger

becoming an adult butterfly) and these toxins make birds sick just like the monarch's do. The function of these colors have been known for decades, but the reason for why toxic animals use one color over another is only beginning to be understood. Why do skunks use black and white stripes to warn animals, but monarch butterflies use orange and black and pipevine swallowtails use blue and orange. It turns out that almost every

color is used by one animal or another as a warning signal although it would make sense for us to all evolve to understand one color as a warning signal. We



Monarch
photo by Ian Morris



Pipevine Swallowtail

if you were smart you attempted to give it plenty of space. Hopefully you were successful and didn't get stung!

Through evolution we have been selected to avoid certain animal colors such as bright yellows and reds. Some of our avoidance

have done this with fire trucks; just imagine how confusing it would be if every fire truck had a different color pattern.

I am studying this question of diversity of warning signals in Panama and here in Arizona. In the tropics there are many colors used as warning signals, even within a closely related group of species. In longwing butterflies, which occur predominantly in Central and South America, all of the species are toxic, but many



Zebra Longwing

due to this segregation, these butterflies have evolved colors that are better warning signals in their respective microhabitat.

You may not have thought about how we perceive color, but I promise that it is complicated. Without even delving into the neural mechanisms involved with color

perception, there are many other factors contributing to color perception. The first component is what light is reflected off of the animal. This light depends on what light is illuminating it. Think of a white piece of paper that is underneath a Christmas tree covered with colored lights. That white paper will no longer look white but instead will have many spots of different colors. This occurs because the colored lights are only emitting certain wavelengths, which are then reflected by the white paper. So, although an animal may have a green patch, if there is no green light illuminating the green patch, the green patch will be difficult to perceive, if at all.



Brett Seymoure

species have different warning coloration. There are blue and white, red and yellow, blue and yellow, and tiger patterned butterflies. These differently colored butterflies inhabit different microhabitats and perhaps

Although here in the desert we have very "white" light from a clear sky, in the tropics it is an entirely different story. First, what is meant by "white" light is that all types of light are equally represented. This white light is a combination of blue light from the blue sky, and the yellow, orange

and red from the sun. In the tropics, the light is very heterogeneous and can be white, red, green, or blue. This occurs due to the location of the sun, clouds, vegetation, and the blue sky. For example, a blue light environment occurs when the blue sky is illuminating a shaded environment. The yellow, orange and red light is blocked by vegetation, but the blue sky is illuminating that area and in turn the light environment there is blue.

These different light environments will affect the coloration of organisms and perhaps the reason for immense diversity in warning signals is to enhance the perception of the different warning signals in different



Tiger Longwing

light environments. We are currently studying this and, through the use of light meters as well as behavioral and physiological studies, we will soon know how important light environments have been for the evolution of diverse warning signals. 🦋

Images of a Sonoran Desert Riparian Masterpiece

by Bob Witzeman, Conservation Chair

“In every walk with nature, one receives far more than one seeks.”

– John Muir 1838-1914

Our Chapter has been blessed with two outstanding photographers who have, for modest or no compensation, provided inspiring images of the Devil's Canyon area. One of the great Sonoran Desert riparian areas of this state now faces obliteration. Two gigantic, politically powerful foreign mining corporations, both having horrendous environmental and human rights records worldwide, have introduced legislation in Congress to construct a mine near Superior, Arizona on U.S. Forest Service land. This riparian “killer” would create a highly destructive “Meteor Crater-sized hole a mile in diameter, and deeper than the Empire State Building is high immediately alongside a riparian gem, Devil's Canyon. The mine owners are now lobbying for their mine's exemption from U.S. environmental and Native American cultural protection laws by means of a proposed special-interest “land-swap” bill they are presenting to Congress.

At this time, MAS would applaud two outstanding photographers who have provided our Chapter with photographic images of this Sonoran Desert



Devil's Canyon (translated as GAAN CANYON - in Apache- a home of their most sacred mountain spirit dancers) - photo by Sky Jacobs

riparian habitat now in jeopardy by this mine. They have given MAS a treasure-trove of photographic documentation and natural history information - essentially without compensation.



*Devil's Canyon
photo by Elias Butler*

Enclosed are examples of two of the many Devil's Canyon photos they have provided to MAS. These two photographers are: (1) *Arizona Highways* cover page-credentialed photographer and author/publisher, Elias Butler of Flagstaff, and (2) esteemed Tucson conservationist, ecologist, and natural world “grand master,” Sky Jacobs. MAS wishes to thank both of them most sincerely for the gift of their time and skills in revealing to the world the natural history and riparian values of this treasure-trove.

Next September's MAS monthly meeting at the Desert Botanical Garden will include breathtaking PowerPoint images of this under-siege habitat by Mssrs. Butler, Jacobs and others. The program has been prepared thanks to the graphic and journalistic talents of our esteemed MAS Program Chairperson, Laurie Nessel. 🌵

Nature through the Artist's Eye: En-Chuen Soo



Originally from the Malaysian state of Sabah on North Borneo Island, En-Chuen Soo was raised on a farm where creativity and appreciation for natural beauty were developed at a young age.

Since late 2005, she has resided in Phoenix and concentrated full-time on producing visual art. Nature remains the primary inspiration of her creations, and her passion for life can be seen in her vivid paintings of landscapes, flora, people, wildlife and abstracts.

She usually reminds herself that life is short, and beauty in life is ablaze in a moment - so short-lived, and remaining eternally only in the memory. www.enchuensoo.com/



The Return of Anna's Hummingbird 12x12" Acrylic

I often see Anna's hummingbirds come to visit my bird feeder at my patio during the winter time. When it is spring time we don't see them as much because food is more plentiful in the desert for them. It reminded me of a fond memory of a baby hummingbird which took shelter by my door during one rainy evening. I could look at it from just one foot away. I didn't want to startle it, and controlled myself not to touch it, but I didn't spare my memory card and took many pictures.



Gathering Gold 24x24" Oil

I added this beautiful bright yellow cactus bloom to my cacti collection series after seeing it at the backyard of a community church in Scottsdale. Upon checking the information, I believe it is a cow-tongue prickly pear.



Golden Cholla Blooms 20x24" Oil

I spotted these beautiful blooms near Saguaro Lake and collected a few reference photos. I then came to know that there are several species of cholla and I believe this is a Buckhorn cholla.



Trail Mark 30x40" Oil

This pile of rocks was dismantled by someone less than half an hour after I took a picture of it. As I searched for painting references through my photo stock, I came across this one which brought back the memory of the moment of peace when I walked through the trail at the park in Sedona.

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miscellaneous

Monthly Meeting

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

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG. Webster is in the far southeast side of the gardens. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at www.maricopa-audubon.org. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

Membership Information

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

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to Scott Burge, membership chair, and he will send it on in to National Audubon for you, or
2. By becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and you will not receive the Audubon magazine or any of the other "benefits" of National Audubon membership, but you will receive a one-year subscription to the *Cactus Wren*. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk-\$1,000-\$9,999 and California Condor-\$10,000+. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Scott Burge, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the *Cactus Wren* is to become a "Friend".) For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail Scott Burge.

Submissions

Copy for *The Cactus Wren* must be received by the editor by e-mail, by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: The Cactus Wren Editor, Emily Morris: monarchmorris@gmail.com

Opinions

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

Reprinting of material

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

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