



The Cactus Wren·dition



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Summer - 2014

Black-tailed Rattlesnake

Photo by Marceline VandeWater



President's Message

By Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

There have been some significant changes with the Maricopa Audubon Society already this year. We lost our beloved Treasurer and former President, Herb Fibel, only two days after the new year began, we are holding our Annual Banquet in a new location, and we are discussing possible new sites for our monthly meetings. But life is a game of adjustments—adapting successfully to change. There is a lot to look forward to in the coming year and we are moving in the right direction!

Last summer I raised my thermostat a couple of degrees and, at first, I noticed the difference. Then, as the summer progressed, I was aware of the temperature inside the house less and less often. Toward the end of the summer it felt no different to me than it did the previous summer when the thermostat was set a few degrees cooler! Try it for yourself this summer, but give yourself time to adjust. You will lessen the load on the power grid and lower your cooling bill.

It is astonishing to me sometimes when I speak to people who live in the Phoenix area and they say that they have never explored much of the rest of the sixth largest state in the Union. Arizona is not just large, it is diverse! Four different deserts, high mountain ranges that can, in effect, transport you a thousand or more miles north, and canyons with plants and animals more typical of Mexico—all can be found inside our borders. We are fortunate to live in a biologically rich part of the world, so get out there and explore it! 🦅

Committees/Support

Arizona Audubon Council Rep
Emerson Stiles
estiles2@hotmail.com

Bookstore
Mel Bramley
480 969-9893

Hospitality
David Chorlton
602 253-5055

Web Page
Michelle Peppers
480 968-5141
burge@burgenv.com

Maricopa Audubon Website
<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>

Maricopa Audubon Phone
480 829-8209

"There is nothing as eloquent as a rattlesnake's tail."

Nazajó proverb.

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.

Letter from the Editor

By Gillian Rice



Gillian Rice

A searing sun in a clear blue Arizona sky. Too hot for birding? Not according to the indomitable Charles Babbitt who extols the rewards of desert shorebirding (see page 10).

Think cool. It works for me. And when I'm delighted, watching a family of Gambel's Quail scurry for cover, a Zebra-tailed Lizard waving its tail, a Black-tailed Jackrabbit languorous under the sliver of a Saguaro's shadow, or a Lesser Nighthawk posing as a rock under a Creosote Bush... I barely notice the heat.

Time to bring out those close-focus binoculars! Enjoy watching dragonflies, damselflies, and butterflies (see page 5 for field trips). Don't forget to check out the beautiful cactus blooms and search for native bees foraging deep inside.

Join Laurie Nessel on her Desert Tortoise Quest (also see page 5). Or, you could escape, like a pair of Phainopeplas, who flash the white of their wings and disappear from the desert after raising a brood. Scientists hypothesize that these same birds might breed once more in Arizona's oak and sycamore canyons.

You could become crepuscular – active at dawn and dusk – like many of our desert creatures. Check out Maricopa County Parks & Recreation at <https://www.maricopa.gov/parks/> to find moonlight hikes. On a ranger-led sunset hike at Spur Cross Conservation Area, I was thrilled to observe a Western Diamondback Rattlesnake beginning its nightly hunt for prey.

I am very grateful to everyone who has contributed to this issue. Special thanks to Marceline VandeWater and Matt VanWallene who patiently search through their photo archives for me as I prepare each issue and let me use their wonderful photos throughout the *Wren-dition*.

This is *your* newsletter. Do share your experiences, knowledge, ideas, and field trip fun with the MAS community. Email me at editor.wrendition@yahoo.com I'd love to hear from you!

A final note: Our courageous secretary Mary Rose continues to train and prepare for her adventure of a lifetime: the Great Pacific Race, which begins on June 7. Visit <http://www.newoceanwave.com> to learn more about this human endurance challenge and <http://maryrows.com> to donate to Mary's cause: bird conservation. Remember to follow Mary's progress at her website after June 7. Good luck, Mary! 🦅



On the Cover: Black-tailed Rattlesnake
Focal length: 400mm, 1/1250 sec, f/5.6,
ISO 400, July 2007

Marceline says: Years ago, members of AZFO (Arizona Field Ornithologists) went on an expedition to the Peloncillo Mountains in the southeast corner of the state. We saw some notable birds (including Lucifer Hummingbird and Thick-billed Flycatcher) but the real highlight was seeing a record high of seven rattlesnakes in one day!

8TH ANNUAL ARIZONA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS STATE MEETING

October 3-5, 2014
Historic Bullion Plaza Museum
Miami, Arizona

If you enjoy observing, surveying, or conducting research on Arizona's birds, please plan to attend the Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) Annual State Meeting. Both members and non-members are invited to attend this enjoyable and educational gathering.

The Meeting features:

- Expert presentations on the identification, status, and distribution of Arizona birds
- Presentations by local experts on where to go birding in Arizona
- Reports on AZFO activities such as Field Expeditions, Seasonal Reports, Sightings Database, the Online Journal, Web Page, and Censuses
- Report from the Arizona Bird Committee
- Mini-field expeditions on Friday afternoon and Sunday morning to less



birded areas of Miami/Globe

- The new Arizona Bird checklist will be available for sale
- Counting Birds with Gale Monson will be for sale. (see Eric Hough's review of this wonderful collection of tributes to and writings by an icon of Arizona and Mexico birding on page 15 of this issue.)
- A chance to meet new friends in the AZ avian research community and visit with old ones!

AZFO meetings move around the state to showcase lesser-known birding areas and communities. This year, the AZFO will shine a spotlight on the Globe-Miami community with local field trips likely to the Pinal and Sierra Ancha Mountains, San Carlos and Roosevelt Lakes, and other nearby birding spots.

The Saturday session features presentations on changing bird status and field research in Arizona, plus reports and future plans for AZFO activities. If you are interested in giving a 15-minute oral or poster presentation on original avian research, surveys, or other pertinent Arizona endeavors, please visit the AZFO

website, www.azfo.org and register on the Call for Papers and Posters page. The deadline for submission of abstracts is September 15. Email your abstract to both Doug Jenness at d_jenness@hotmail.com and Pierre Deviche at pierre.deviche@asu.edu.

Financial assistance to attend the annual meeting is available for young people interested in ornithology. Scholarships include up to \$250 reimbursement for transportation and two nights accommodation, banquet meal, and one-year membership to AZFO.

For more information and to register, please visit www.azfo.org.

Birds Are Closer Than They Appear

By David Chorlton

*The thrasher's concentration
as he moves through the uncut grass
prodding his bill
into the earth
often goes unnoticed,*

*as does the way the hummingbird
backs away for seconds
from the feeder
to look around before the next
sweet drops, also*

*the industry of starlings
when the ground gives little
to their brightly flecked
attention. People mostly*

*pass them by, having appointments
to keep, a repair to arrange,
a telephone call to reply to,
or currency to change,
all while the world*

*they were born into
keeps coming close, but
they don't notice the doves
picking seeds from the cracks*

*in a concrete driveway, or the towhee
who always comes late
in the day to a yard
where the sparrows bathe
and not even the dust goes to waste.*

MAS 60th Annual Banquet

Tuesday May 6

Guest Speaker: Troy Corman

Recent Seasonal Distribution and Status Changes of Arizona Birds

New Location this year: Franciscan Renewal Center
5802 E Lincoln Drive
Scottsdale, Arizona, 85283

- 6pm Social Hour (BYOB/W beer or wine)
- 7pm Buffet Dinner (chicken and vegetarian options)
- Raffle (tickets available at the door)
- Silent Auction
- Presentation of the Fifth Annual Herbert Spencer Fibel Memorial Award (formerly Herbert Larson Memorial Award) for Distinguished Service to Maricopa Audubon Society

Come early to meet old friends and peruse the auction and raffle tables

Cost: \$28/person, \$25/person for Friends of Maricopa Audubon Society. Reservations are required.

You may send payment in advance or pay at the door: cash or check.

Please make your reservation by contacting:

MAS Treasurer Matt VanWallene at 480-204-1104, zoutedrop@gmail.com
or MAS President Mark Larson at 480 474-4439, larsonwarren@gmail.com

No-shows will be billed. **Mail checks payable to:**

Maricopa Audubon Society
c/o Matt VanWallene
11004 E Villa Park St.
Chandler, AZ 85248

Notes & Announcements

PUBLISHING SUCCESS

MAS member Charles Babbitt will have an article about Pinyon Jays and Clark's Nutcrackers in the June 2014 edition of *BirdWatching* magazine www.birdwatchingdaily.com

MARY ROSE BEGINS THE GREAT PACIFIC RACE ON JUNE 7

June 7, 2014 marks the start of the race to show that Extinction is Optional®. Through the Great Pacific Race, Mary Rose, MAS Secretary, will be rowing almost 3000 miles from California to Hawaii to raise funds to benefit avian conservation. A 90 day journey across the Pacific Ocean, powered only by oars. Mary says: "Don't let another species become another Carolina Parakeet or Passenger Pigeon. Let's do something now to help the birds." For more information and to make a donation, visit

www.chirpingcentral.com or www.MaryRows.com



FLIGHT
PLAN

NEW WILD BIRD CENTER STORE

Owner Steve Shcolnik and Manager Chris Waters have opened a Wild Bird Center store in the Scott-Shea Shopping Center at 10701 North Scottsdale Rd. #107, Scottsdale, AZ 85254. Store hours are 9:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday – Saturday and 10:00 am to 5:00 pm on Sunday.

Shcolnik is a life-long resident of Scottsdale with keen interests in the environment and wild birds. "We are fortunate to have beautiful backyard birds in our region of Arizona so our goal is to help people attract and enjoy these delightful creatures in every way possible," he says.



Charles Babbitt

"We also are here to help people create and improve backyard bird and wildlife habitats to enhance our community and assist our customers to enjoy fully this unique and peaceful hobby. In the future, we will expand our offerings to include educational events, on-site and off-site workshops, and bird walks."

Contact Steve Shcolnik and Chris Waters at (480) 991-3311 or scottsdale@wildbird.com or visit www.wildbird.com/scottsdale

HASSAYAMPA RIVER PRESERVE

Saturday June 7, 8:30 – 11:00 am. Bird walk with master bird bander Anne Leight. For reservations call 928 684-2772 or email bmccollum@tnc.org

AUDUBON ARIZONA RIO SALADO HABITAT

Guided Bird Walk every Saturday 8:00 – 9:00 am. Birders are free to continue birding on their own after 9:00 am. For more information, see www.riosalado.audubon.org

YAMPA VALLEY CRANE FESTIVAL

With beautiful fall weather and hundreds of Greater Sandhill Cranes staging in the Yampa Valley before migrating south, September is a perfect time for a visit to Northwest Colorado. The 3rd Annual Yampa Valley Crane Festival will take place September 12-15 in Steamboat Springs and Hayden, Colorado. It features four days of free events: daily crane viewings, nature and bird walks, expert speakers, films, a bird art show, workshops, children's and family activities, and more. Ted Floyd, editor of *Birding* magazine and Dr. Richard Beilfuss, President and CEO of the International Crane Foundation will be two of the featured speakers. Please visit

www.coloradocranes.org for a complete festival schedule. Questions? Email: coloradocranes@gmail.com

SIGN UP FOR THE E-NEWSLETTER!

To receive updates and supplements to *The Cactus Wren•dition*, sign up for the monthly (September to May) e-newsletter. It includes meeting and field trip reminders, special events, and citizen science projects. To subscribe, contact laurienessel@gmail.com Note: We do not use the email list for anything other than the described purpose.



What did you say about my collision claim?

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

field trips

Car Pooling: Please make every effort to organize your own car pool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. Be courteous to the trip leaders and help cover their gas costs. We recommend that passengers reimburse drivers 10 cents per mile each.

Reminders:

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

Day Passes: Many locations in the National Forests require Day Use Passes. For details, see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/main/tonto/passes-permits/recreation>

Saturday May 10

Lopiano Habitat (Tempe/Scottsdale)

A relatively short walk through dense, former Salt River bosque with adjacent desert (Papago Park) and easy access to Tempe Town Lake north shore sites. Raptors, desert birds, and possible late migrant passerines. Meet at 7:00 am at west end of Tempe Marsh (Salt River) overlook alongside northwest parking lot of Tempe Marketplace, McClintock and Rio Salado (west end) to depart for habitat by 7:30 am. Easy. Bring optics and water.

Leader: Myron Scott, 480 968-2179, gaia_3@netzero.com

Thursday - Friday May 15-16

Fairbanks/St. David area

I got an opportunity to explore a part of this area last year, later in the summer, and it was very productive, as well as lovely. I'm hoping that migration is an equally great time to be there. The loop at Fairbanks is a couple of miles long, but relatively flat, although sandy. St. David is shorter and also generally easy going. Expect to see chats with flycatchers, grosbeaks, vireos, buntings and other migrants possible, along with Gray Hawks, Common Ground-Doves, and a possible Mississippi Kite at St.

David. We'll start early on May 15 to hit some hotspots on the way south, and depending on timing, may end up at St. David at the end of the day. We'll concentrate on Fairbanks the next day and may return to St. David. Back in Phoenix on Friday about 6:00 pm. Benson will probably be our place to stay. Moderate hiking. Limit 8. Leader: Kathe Anderson, kathe.coot@cox.net

Sunday June 8

Oak Flat and Devil's Canyon

Desert uplands birds in varied habitats; spectacular scenery in the under-birded, secluded canyon, threatened by mining. Meet at 6:30 am at Oak Flat campground pullout, Oak Flat Rd., south side of US 60, 3 miles northeast of Superior, to begin birding the campground by 7:00 am, followed by an introduction to Devil's Canyon. Easy (campground) to moderately difficult (canyon). (You can quit after Oak Flat, of course.) Bring optics, water, sun hat and sunscreen, possibly a walking stick, and sturdy, close-toed shoes.

Leader: Myron Scott, 480 968-2179, gaia_3@netzero.com

Sunday - Monday June 22-23

Mt. Lemmon

Mt. Lemmon deserves an entire day (maybe two!), and the most reasonable way to do that is to spend the night in Tucson. We'll probably start early from Phoenix on Sunday, to hit Sweetwater and a couple of Tucson hotspots before turning in fairly early. We'll be up before dawn on Monday to begin our trek up Mt. Lemmon, with the hope of getting all the way to the top for a late lunch (about 2:00 pm) in the restaurant there. Then we'll return to Phoenix, to arrive about 7:00 pm on Monday evening. Given the handful of life zones as we work our way up the mountain, we should see Upper Sonoran desert, chaparral, oak woodland (encinal), transition (Ponderosa Pine), and montane (mixed conifer) species—a nice variety, to be supplemented by whatever waterfowl may be hanging around Sweetwater and any other pond we visit. Resident species as well as neotropical nesters should be available. Easy to moderate. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson, kathe.coot@cox.net

4th Sundays: June 22, July 27, September 28, October 26

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch

This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies, and damselflies. Learn to identify local butterflies including Painted Lady, Queen, and Fiery Skipper as well as common dragonflies and damselflies such as Western Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer, Blue-ringed Dancer and Familiar Bluet. 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 level: easy. Meet 7:00 am at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Road off Guadalupe Road in Gilbert.

Leaders: Janet Witzeman & Laurie Nessel

August/September/October, 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. Learn about the behavior, life cycle, and status of this keystone species. Difficulty level: moderate. Steep, rocky terrain and hot, humid weather. Bring snacks, sun protection, hat, sturdy hiking shoes, and plenty of water. We will start near daybreak and be back by noon. Leader: Laurie Nessel. To be contacted (as late as the night before the trip) and get directions, send your email address to laurienessel@gmail.com

Remember to sign up for the e-newsletter (see page 4) so that you can receive updated information on field trips.

Tales From The Field



Male Costa's Hummingbird. Photo by Michael Searcy

"One-Foot"

By Michael Searcy

This intrepid male Costa's Hummingbird holds court at the entry bridge at Desert Botanical Garden. He is very human-tolerant and quite bold. How he lost his right foot I do not know. I have spent time with him for over two years, and he seems to still be as interested in me as I am in him. 🐦

Cooper's Hawk Surprise

By Vicki Hire

On March 16, we were in Tupac, Arizona looking for the Sinaloa Wren, when a pair of Cooper's Hawks flew in front of us and started breaking off branches and taking them to their nest. Lighting wasn't the best because of all the trees, but I managed to get a least one decent shot. 🐦



Cooper's Hawk. Photo by Vicki Hire

Walk This Way... to Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park!

By Vicki Hire

Walk This Way! You may not be a fan of hard rock group Aerosmith, but after one visit to Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park, you'll definitely be telling your friends to "Walk This Way"... over to Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park!

Located on the northeast corner of Chandler Heights and Lindsay Roads, the park is nestled between farmland and suburbia.



Coyote

as well as a premier birding spot in the valley with 153 recorded species! Available throughout the park are wildlife viewing areas. Visitors are encouraged to sign up for free guided family bird watching tours lasting one hour or Sunday morning nature walks exploring plants and animals in the park and led by experienced naturalists.

A recent spring break visit to the park found both friends and fowl enjoying the weather. A White-faced Ibis was lingering at one of the "survival areas" near recharge basin #3, one of five recharge basins in the park.

According to Michael Ballard, Recreation Coordinator at the park, these survival areas are constantly wet, even when any of the five recharge basins are dry. The recharge basins are periodically filled with water runoff and reclaimed water, which is pumped into



White-faced Ibis

the basins as part of the city's recreation and water resource management plan. Basins #1 and #2, located on the northwest section of the park, are the best draining and are therefore filled the most often, providing riparian and wetland habitat to attract wildlife.

Spring break visit provided a chuckle, reminiscent of the Wile E Coyote and Roadrunner cartoon, when a Greater Roadrunner ran

through recharge basin #4, where just a few months earlier a Coyote was spotted in the same area!

A favorite with visitors, a Burrowing Owl was seen basking in the sun. These small owls are federally protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and should not be approached or fed.

A Black-crowned Night Heron flew overhead, while a Common Gallinule was seen foraging the banks of the urban fishing area.

Brittlebush was in full bloom, providing a delightful scene along the 4½ miles of trails for hikers, bikers, joggers, and dog walkers alike. This common desert shrub has a long history of uses including incense, glue, medicinal, and as a toothbrush!

Chandler resident, Johnny, was spending his day off fishing for Catfish. The five acre lake is stocked by the Arizona Game & Fish Department every two weeks mid-September through June, with Bass, Blue Gill, Catfish, and Carp, which are used to maintain the vegetation in the lake. An urban fishing license is required. The park is popular with pet owners: all dogs must be on a leash.

The spring break visit to Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park ended with a stop at the Environmental Educational Center (EEC). Located at the entrance to the park, the EEC provides abundant detail on the facilities available, from educational class schedules and programs, and the rental of picnic ramadas, to recreational opportunities such as nature camps, fishing, and the hiking and equestrian trails. Located inside the EEC, the Owl's Nest Nature Store provides a great selection of souvenirs and nature gifts from postcards and t-shirts to seeds and hiking sticks. A checklist of birds and map of the park are also available.

Scout troops and volunteers are welcome to help with park maintenance tasks such as spreading mulch and improving trails throughout the park. Volunteer applications can be found on the park website: www.chandleraz.gov/veterans-oasis

If you're looking for a local valley spot suitable for all ages to hang out for the day and enjoy nature, Walk This Way... to Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park! (Wheelchairs are available at no charge).

Vicki Hire is a MAS member
All photos by Vicki Hire



Burrowing Owl



Veterans Oasis Park Survival Area

Elusive Harlequin Ducks

By Lisa Fitzner

Once in a while you do something that others might deem to be a little “over the top.” This was probably the case when I decided to ship my camper on a barge up Lake Chelan to the remote town of Stehekin, Washington and traverse unimproved roads to the foothills of the Cascade Mountains. Why would I undertake such a mission? To band Harlequin Ducks of course.

The Stehekin River is a classic Harlequin stream: crystal clear white water with lots of diving pools full of tasty invertebrates. The shoreline is heavily forested with old growth fir trees and downed logs which create quality nesting habitat. Although we knew that Harlequins were utilizing the Stehekin River, we were unsure if these ducks were year round residents of Washington or coming from somewhere else along the Pacific Coast.

From a duck’s perspective, it seemed like it would be a relatively short flight from Puget Sound, across the Cascade Mountains, to find protected nesting habitat in the North Cascades National Park. If only I could catch and band a few Harlequins, I might be able to figure out where the Stehekin population wintered.



Lisa Fitzner holds a female Harlequin Duck



Male Harlequin Duck. Photo by Ray Spencer

Since I worked for a state agency, the Park Service biologists were a little miffed that I was trampling on their turf. No matter; they figured the chance of me catching a Harlequin Duck was slim and the chance of me drowning was high. Regardless of their attitude, I was determined to

prove I could catch at least a couple of ducks. Equipped with mist nets and chest waders, I took off to prove the Park Service biologists wrong.

So how in the world do you catch a nearly aquatic species that swims and dives in white water? The first step in any wildlife capture operation is recognizance. Before setting the net, I identified a side channel that contained a secretive breeding pair. Bushwhacking through dense underbrush (no easy job with ten foot mist net poles), I stealthily crept

downstream of my quarry. When I was out of the ducks’ line of sight, I strung my mist net across the stream, and quietly headed back upstream. Once I was above where the ducks were resting, I plunged into the waist-deep water and cautiously made my way down the river. Upon spotting me, the ducks began to move downstream with the current. About 20 meters above the net I rushed the ducks (as best as I could with waders on), and bingo, the Harlequins took flight and were quickly snared in the net. Gleeefully, I proceeded to remove the ducks for banding. Needless to say the Park Service biologist, who accompanied me on my first attempt, was dumbfounded. He then suggested that banding the birds did not mean I would ever recapture them or gain any information about their migratory routes. Boy, was he surprised when I announced that the first duck was already banded!

At that time, very few Harlequins had been caught on their breeding grounds, and little was known about their breeding behavior or migratory pathways. By capturing a banded duck, we were able to determine that at least some of the Stehekin River population wintered on the east coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia. Further band returns, from subsequent Stehekin captures, revealed that the birds were wintering in the northern portion of Puget Sound as well. As the Harlequin Duck was a species of great concern, we were thrilled to know that its salt water wintering areas, as well as its breeding habitat, would always remain protected. 🦆

Lisa Fitzner worked as a wildlife biologist for the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and serves as Publicity Chair for MAS.

Meet Your Bird Guide

By Matt VanWallene

meet your bird guide

I went on my first guided bird walk in March 2009 at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum and was lucky to get a Zone-tailed Hawk as

a lifebird. My guide that day, wearing her signature floppy hat, was Kathe Anderson who guides there a few times a year. I have been on some walks with her since then, including a birding class at the Hassayampa River Preserve. If you are a regular birder in Arizona like I am you will have seen her in Madera Canyon, Patagonia Lake, or at the Gilbert Water Ranch.

At the age of six, Kathe's mom sat her down in the woods and asked her not to squirm or make any noise. Her first memory of a bird outing is that she sat on a log for what seemed an "insufferably" long time. However, the experience instilled an appreciation for nature and a birding hobby that has stuck with her all her life.

Kathe's first guide trip was ten years ago at the Desert Botanical Garden. She is very appreciative of the mentoring of the docents there, not only about birding, but also leadership skills. After the many trips she has led, it's the people she guides that makes a trip memorable. A visceral reaction to a bird by one of her participants makes for a great and successful encounter. Success has brought a following from as far away as New York and Canada with some folks planning their visits around her scheduled events.

Kathe is at a six outings per month pace, some of which are overnights. Managing the logistics of those trips, and the hours spent on the road keeps her very, very busy. Her day job is a lawyer for a valley municipality specializing in ordinances. On my next trip with her I will have to ask what the difference is between guiding and escorting.

Her ABA bird count is over 500 and probably twice that for her world count from as far away as Australia and as exotic as Colombia. Despite that diversity she has a special fondness for a patch just a few hundred yards from her home. The urban setting belies the wildness of the wash. I am very envious of her having seen an American Redstart and a Red Crossbill just a three minute walk from her home. Thanks to a friend of hers,

Barb Meding, her latest lifer is a Tri-colored Blackbird seen at Lake Hemet up in the San Jacinto Mountains outside of Palm Springs.

Kathe is a member of the valley's Audubon associations and other conservation organizations. She also collects donations for the American Bird Conservancy and the Arizona Important Bird Areas program. Each of her bird outings ends with a review of the birds seen on the trip, snacks (my favorite part) and pamphlets about her favorite associations and programs.

One can only imagine all the birding experiences Kathe has had with all her travels. The strangest experience was a Brown-headed Cowbird

resting on a boat beyond the sight of land. That same trip got her a Northern Fulmar, a bird I had never heard of. I smiled at some of the similarities we shared like Marsh Wrens that don't give you a good look and the difficulty in identifying sparrows and gulls. And there are those lucky moments like seeing 60 species in 90 minutes at Tres Rios.



Kathe Anderson



A juvenile Kathe Hawk, what I call every Zone-tailed Hawk that I see.
Photo by Matt VanWallene

Kathe is for hire for individuals or groups and has been paid with wine, plumbing help, chocolate truffles, and donations to favorite organizations. You will always find her trips noted in the Field Trips section of the *Wren•dition*. Kathe can be reached at kathe.coot@cox.net 🐦

Matt VanWallene serves as Treasurer of MAS.

Fall Shorebirding in the Desert Southwest

By Charles Babbitt

Two shorebirders, telescopes in hand, struggle through dense tamarisk trees toward water rapidly evaporating under the mid-day sun. They are looking for shorebirds flying south from high arctic breeding grounds in Canada and Alaska. Their hope is that some have stopped to linger at a small pond along Interstate 8 outside Gila Bend, Arizona. It is mid-August, and across North America fall shorebird migration is under way.

Shimmering heat waves make telescope viewing difficult, but eventually birds come into focus. About two dozen shorebirds are feeding along the edges of the water picking and probing in the dark mud with their long tubular bills. Among them are juvenile Western Sandpipers sporting bright rufous scapulars, Least Sandpipers, a scaly-backed juvenile Baird's Sandpiper, Long-billed Dowitchers, and a lone Semipalmated Plover that occasionally stretches itself upright as it runs across the mud. Out in the deeper water, two Wilson's Phalaropes are spinning in circles picking at the water with their long pointed bills. Telescopes soon focus on a bird at the corner of the pond. It is noticeably different, a large, long winged, rather dumpy-looking shorebird with rusty red feathers throughout its breast. It is a Red Knot, a rare vagrant whose 9000 mile fall migration takes it from arctic breeding grounds to wintering grounds at the tip of South America. For these diehard shorebirders, the Red Knot is the bird of the day, perhaps the bird of the season.

The desert southwest is not a place that normally comes to mind when you think about shorebirding. Sparsely vegetated desert landscapes broiling under a relentless sun are a far cry from the cool tidal flats, sandy beaches, and watery marshes one associates with shorebirds.

Shorebirds often pass unnoticed flying high over the deserts or only stopping briefly to rest. Driving along Interstate 8 toward California in the heat of the summer, one would hardly suspect that a major migration is under way. That is, until you find some water.

Water is hard to find in the desert southwest,

Shorebirders are resourceful

particularly in central and western Arizona where much of it gets used up by municipal and agricultural water users and the area's innumerable golf courses. Aside from a handful of well-known and generally reliable spots, suitable shorebird habitat is always scarce. Desert shorebirders know, however, that even a little water in this arid environment is often enough to attract an impressive variety of shorebirds that will stop to rest and feed if water levels are right.

A variety of places can attract migrating shorebirds including flooded alfalfa fields, recharge ponds, irrigation canals and impoundments, ephemeral ponds from the late summer rains, and sludge and containment ponds at water treatment and dairy cattle feeding operations. Shorebirders have to be resourceful. Many of these far-flung water sources are only temporary and new places

Shorebirders are tough

often have to be found each year. A good shorebirding spot one week can be completely dried up two weeks later. One fall a broken water main west of Phoenix

sent a flood of water into a nearby gravel pit creating excellent shorebird habitat for the next three weeks.

Shorebirds migrate through southwestern deserts at the very hottest and driest time of the year. This means that shorebirders not only have to be resourceful, they have to be tough. Daytime temperatures in these areas can sometimes reach 115 degrees.



Least Sandpiper. Photo by Matt VanWallene



Red Knot at Glendale Recharge Ponds. Photo by Pete Moulton

Besides the heat, shorebirders often have to contend with swarms of flies, near suffocating smells from wastewater treatment and containment ponds, and heat waves rising off the water that can make telescope viewing nearly impossible. At times, sun heated telescopes and tripods can become almost too hot to carry. On occasion shorebirding can be downright hazardous. Shorebirders sometimes have to cross drying mud flats especially on ephemeral ponds and lakes like Painted Rock Reservoir near Gila Bend. Shorebirders walking across mudflats to scope for birds can suddenly find themselves knee deep in mud as sun baked cracks in the ground give way under their feet.

Fall shorebird migration actually begins in early summer, often by the end of June or early July. The last arctic bound shorebirds headed north have barely passed through when the first southbound adults begin to appear. A few years ago, an adult Baird's Sandpiper found at the Glendale recharge pond near Phoenix in mid-June left a friend and me wondering if it was a rare spring migrant going north or an early adult returning south. By early July, however, returning adult shorebirds begin appearing in steadily growing numbers. Many of these arctic breeders are in worn alternate plumage and they are sometimes joined by more numerous migrating Great Basin breeders like Wilson's Phalarope,

Long-billed Curlew, Willet, and other water birds like White-faced Ibis and Forster's and Black Terns. Female Wilson's Phalaropes sometimes begin arriving as early as late June leaving the male phalaropes to tend the juveniles back on the breeding grounds.

One of my favorite arctic breeders, the Stilt Sandpiper, sometimes shows up in mid-July. I remember watching one of these elegant waders standing in belly deep water near the alkali-crusted edge of an evaporating irrigation ditch. It still retained most of its alternate plumage, deep chestnut red on its face and head and striking black barring on the chest and belly. Another arctic breeder, Greater Yellowlegs, can show up even earlier, perhaps in early July. They also retain much of their alternate plumage, especially the dark barring on the flanks. When you see these birds in the scorching heat at the edge of a sludge pond it is difficult to imagine that a few weeks earlier they may have been on arctic tundra or in a northern muskeg bog surrounded by black spruce trees.

The pace of shorebird migration quickens at the end of July. This is the time when juveniles begin to appear. Adult shorebirds depart arctic breeding grounds first, followed by the juveniles a few weeks later. I always look forward to the arrival of these young birds who are undertaking their first daunting

Fall Shorebirding in the Desert Southwest (continued)

journey southward. Among the first arrivals are juvenile Least Sandpipers and juvenile Western Sandpipers with their distinctive bright rufous scapulars. Juvenile shorebirds often have crisp, scaly looking backs with buffy breasts. This is the case with both juvenile Baird's Sandpipers and juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers. Both Baird's and Pectoral Sandpipers are rare in Arizona in the springtime with most adults migrating north through the middle and eastern part of the continent. Beginning in late July, however, numbers of juvenile Baird's Sandpipers begin migrating though the southwest followed by juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers about a month

later. This is also the time when two uncommon shorebirds, juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher and Semipalmated Sandpiper, are sometimes found by sharp-eyed shorebirders. Both these species can easily be overlooked among the more common and expected Long-billed Dowitchers and Western Sandpipers.

Desert shorebirders often have the same problem with shorebirds that they have with gulls: a lack of familiarity. Birders along the coasts are accustomed

to seeing scores of migrating shorebirds in a variety of molts and plumages; it is easy to compare their relative sizes, shapes and ages. In the desert southwest, however, there are many fewer shorebirds present at any given time. Shorebirds are often found in small numbers or as single birds in unlikely places under difficult weather and lighting conditions. Lack of experience and familiarity make it easier for a rare species to slip by unnoticed or a more common species to be misidentified.

One of the tougher and more unpleasant places to shorebird are containment ponds at dairy cattle feeding operations. These "slop ponds," as they are called by local birders, can produce great shorebirds on occasion, including such species as Black-bellied Plover, Snowy Plover, Willet, Dunlin, and several years ago, a Red Phalarope, that most pelagic of the phalarope species. Last year, a Sharp-tailed Sandpiper was found at a dairy slop pond in western Maricopa County in late September.

Black-necked Stilts, American Avocets, and Killdeer are three locally breeding shorebird species that are often encountered by shorebirders along the banks

Identification challenges



Greater Yellowlegs. Photo by Marceline VandeWater



*Greater Yellowlegs and American Avocet.
Photo by Marceline VandeWater*

and edges of these ponds. All three species lay their eggs in shallow scooped out depressions on the open ground often during the hottest part of the summer.

I am always amazed at how they manage to raise their young under such extreme conditions. Actually, they do quite well. These birds sit on their exposed but well camouflaged eggs, not to keep them warm but to keep them cool. The stilts and avocets go even further, soaking their breast feathers in water to aid in the egg cooling process. Shorebirders who get too close to these nests are often confronted by loud scolding calls, occasional swooping attacks, and in the case of Killdeer, the classic “broken wing” feint.

Some relief from the Southwest’s oppressive heat comes in early August with the onset of the Arizona monsoon season. A shift in the prevailing winds from west to south or southwest brings up moist air from the Gulf of California. These prevailing winds and the storms they create, not only bring rain, but possibly a variety of dispersing birds from the Gulf and nearby Salton Sea, including species like Wood Stork, Black Skimmer, Little Blue Heron, Reddish Egret, and on rare occasions, a Roseate Spoonbill. Juvenile Brown Pelicans disperse from the Gulf every year at this time, perhaps in large numbers. Shorebirders are sometimes amazed to see a Brown Pelican quietly floating in a small pond or flying along a highway. It is enough to

When you visit alfalfa fields the trick is to drive around and find places where irrigation water is being turned out into fields a few inches deep. Long-billed Curlew, Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs, Long-billed Dowitcher and Pectoral Sandpipers are often attracted to these areas. Sometimes you can let the birds find the right habitat for you. More than once I have found good shorebirding spots by following passing flocks of Long-billed Curlew or White-faced Ibis and watching to see where they land. Some of the special shorebirds

that have been found in alfalfa fields include Ruff, Upland Sandpiper, and Arizona’s first Buff-breasted Sandpiper. Solitary Sandpipers can sometimes be spotted in the bottoms of drying irrigation canals in these areas.

The annual fall shorebird migration reaches its height at the end of August. During this peak time you can watch an almost continual turnover of migrating shorebirds at a few well-known locations like the Glendale recharge ponds and Gilbert Water Ranch near Phoenix and Willcox Lake in southeastern Arizona. On a good day, shorebirders can find over 20 different species. The list of fall shorebirds is impressive and continues to grow. Some of the rare

Get to know our local shorebirds

and uncommon arctic migrants found in Arizona in the fall include Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Wandering Tattler, American Golden Plover, Pacific Golden Plover, Sanderling, Red Phalarope, and Ruff.

At times desert shorebirding can be difficult but in spite of occasional hardships, it is fun and always unpredictable. You never know from year to year what is going to show up or where. The Curlew Sandpiper is a species that many think is overdue in Arizona. This highly migratory Siberian breeder could well show up some fall perhaps in the central or western part of the state stopping briefly at a water treatment or containment pond. More than likely it will be a buffy-breasted, scaly-backed juvenile on its first solo journey southward. We will be watching for it. 🦶

Note: Be sure to get permission and obey all posted signs when birding at the locations mentioned in this article.

Charles Babbitt is a MAS member and a past member of the Arizona Bird Committee.

Visit fields and farms

make one think one has been out in the sun too long.

Two of the more reliable places to look for shorebirds in this arid environment are irrigated alfalfa fields and sod farms. There are very few sod farms in Arizona but they can produce great shorebirds. The state’s first Pacific Golden Plover and an early July Upland Sandpiper were both found on a sod farm near Picacho.

Philandering Females

By Tom Gatz

What unusual breeding habits do some of our female quail have in common with arctic-nesting shorebirds? It started innocently enough, like gossip often does. A Desert Botanical Garden (DBG) volunteer at lunch asked "Are quail monogamous?" Someone replied, "I'm pretty sure they stay together, at least during the breeding season." "But do we know for sure?" another diner queried. A quick check of the quail literature in the DBG library broke the story wide open - some female quail sleep around. Who knew?

Researcher Julie Hagelin did. She found that some female Gambel's Quail in New Mexico abandon their mates, leaving the males as single parents to raise their half-grown broods of young. Seemingly adding insult to injury, the females immediately paired up with new males and started another clutch of eggs. This behavior may explain the occasional single male quail we see raising chicks alone. I had always assumed this was due to the untimely death of the female. At least in some cases, it might be attributable to a broken marriage. In contrast to the female, male quail under observation never obtained a second mate, even when other unpaired females were available.

The research was unable to determine if the second clutches with new males were raised successfully. However, assuming these females are at least occasionally successful, it would demonstrate that, rather than being an example of poor parenting, this is likely an adaptive strategy that allows the heaviest females (those with extra energy reserves) to maximize their reproductive output during the limited breeding season. Instead of putting all her eggs in one basket (so to speak), she is essentially

squeezing two breeding attempts into one season. Unlike Mourning Dove pairs that raise young from egg laying to independence in just one month, enabling them to raise young up to six times a year, monogamous quail pairs require up to four months to complete the process just once, precluding the opportunity to successfully nest more than one time each season, if they stay together.

Females having a series of mates in one season, behavior known as serial polyandry, has been documented in other species of birds, especially among

shorebirds that nest during the very short Arctic summer, enabling them to lay several clutches each season. Some species of shorebirds known as phalaropes, take it to an extreme. In these species, the larger, brightly colored females fight with other females over smaller, drably plumaged males with which to mate. The victor lays her eggs and leaves the male with the entire clutch to incubate and raise (hence the need for drab, camouflaged plumage in the male, normally only found on female birds). She goes off and starts the whole process over again, until it's time to migrate south. From a genetic standpoint, the individual with the most offspring that survive long enough to reproduce, wins.

(An earlier version of

this article appeared in *Gatherings*, the newsletter for volunteers at the Desert Botanical Garden) 🌵

Tom Gatz is a long time MAS member.

Reference: Hagelin, J.C. 2003. A Field Study of Ornaments, Body Size, and Mating Behavior of the Gambel's Quail. *The Wilson Bulletin*, 115 (3): 246-257



Sometimes mom runs off with a new mate and leaves the male quail to finish raising their babies alone. Photo by Matt VanWallene

Counting Birds with Gale Monson edited by Bill Broyles and Richard L. Glinski. 2012, 244 pp.

Our knowledge of Arizona's rich bird life was founded upon the work of intrepid ornithologists who began to document wildlife throughout the state's vast landscape. One of the most significant figures in Arizona's ornithological history was Gale Monson, who passed away in 2012. Following his passing, friends and colleagues collected personal anecdotes, past interviews, and historical documents and notes of Gale Monson's to help honor his memory with a tribute compilation: *Counting Birds with Gale Monson*. Monson's family published the book and donated all copies to the Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) to distribute. All sales go towards AZFO's Gale Monson Research Grants to further honor his legacy.

If you have an interest in Arizona's avifauna, you may be familiar with some of Monson's earlier works, *The Birds of Arizona* (by A. Phillips, J. Marshall and G. Monson, 1964, University of Arizona Press), which provided the first comprehensive descriptions of the status and distribution of Arizona bird species documented at that time, and the *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona* (by G. Monson and A. Phillips, 1981, University of Arizona Press). Along with these valuable contributions, Monson was also among the first to document the bird life of the wildlife refuges in southwestern Arizona and throughout adjacent Sonora, Mexico, and was instrumental in some of the first studies on desert bighorn sheep. He kept 80 years of meticulous field notes, authored several scientific articles,

and contributed to chapters in several books on birds throughout his almost 100 years of life.

Much more than a standard biography, *Counting Birds with Gale Monson* portrays his unique personality and impressive work ethic, as much as the colorful period

of history he lived through. Interviews with Monson and anecdotes from those whose lives he influenced are informative, touching, humorous, inspiring, and engrossing. Beginning birdwatchers, hard-core birders, ornithologists, naturalists, and history buffs will all gain something rewarding from exploring this fantastic compilation of an extraordinary man's

life. In addition to insightful narratives, the book provides some excerpts of Monson's journal entries, photos of him working in the field, and a full bibliography of his work for those who wish to learn more. Gale Monson will be remembered as an intelligent and kind man, who took the time to instill a deep interest in nature and scientific

integrity, both among his peers and younger generations of field researchers. His impact continues to reach the ornithologists who have followed in his footsteps and *Counting Birds with*

Gale Monson is a vessel to help further propagate that influence in generations of naturalists to come.

Counting Birds with Gale Monson can be purchased for \$34.45 (including shipping). Email Janet Witzeman at jlwitzeman@aol.com 🐦

Note: this review was published in the Tucson Audubon Society's publication, *Vermilion Flycatcher*, Jan-Mar 2014.



L to R Janet Witzeman, Richard Glinski, and Bob Witzeman

He kept 80 years of meticulous field notes, authored several scientific articles, and contributed to chapters in several books on birds throughout his almost 100 years of life.

Connecting Children with Nature at the Desert Botanical Garden

By Emily Morris

Stop for a minute and think back to your childhood: what is your most striking memory of being outside? I would bet that the memory that jumps into your mind does not include playing sports, does not include a jungle gym or other equipment, but was dirty, unstructured, and definitely fun. These are the types of experiences that we provide and teach about to our children and families at the Desert Botanical Garden.

It is not surprising to many of us that the recent scientific literature researching the ways in which children grow into environmentally-minded adults highlights the importance of experiences like these. A study that surveyed hundreds of nature-loving adults found the two things all of these people had in common were as children they spent lots of unstructured time outside and they often shared those times with a loving adult.

Unfortunately, children today spend half as much time outside as their parents did. There are a myriad of factors that can be blamed for this decline including safety concerns, over-reliance on technology, and even the economy. But kids are definitely not a lost cause. Organizations like Maricopa Audubon and the Desert Botanical Garden are at the forefront of education for children and adults. The more opportunities there are for families to get outside and learn about the unique Sonoran Desert, the more environmentally-minded adults we will have in 20 years.



A camper uses a hand lens to study the compound eyes of damselflies.

Most environmental education activities focus on children or adults but few emphasize the family. The Desert Botanical Garden's programs focus on connecting the entire family to nature through shared experiences as well as the more traditional "kid-only" programs like summer camp. The Seedlings Preschool Program at the Garden is a prime example; caregivers bring their three to five year old to the Garden to learn about desert ecology through hands-on experiments and explorations.

At first, many parents sit to the side or hang back, wanting to reach for their phones. But we quickly rope them in to singing, digging, examining, and asking their own desert-inspired questions. We had one family where both the



It is important for kids to spend time in nature with loving adults.



Summer Camp is a perfect time for kids to learn to trust their innate abilities to explore and discover.

grandmother and the child cried when Seedlings finished for the year! These are the types of experiences that stick with you to adulthood.

The Garden's children's programs also encourage autonomy and empowerment. So many kids today are told what to do, how to do it, and how long to spend doing it. Our summer camps give time for kids to design their own experiments, ask their own questions, and this leads to their own conclusions. These are not packaged, pre-determined pieces of science. Sometimes the experiment fails – maybe the leaves blow away or the ants escape – but everyone learns and no one gives up. What an amazing gift to be able to give to a child.

If you want your child or grandchild to grow up to really care about the environment, they have to love it first. The key to loving nature is to spend lots of time with it and in it – with you! Take kids outside to explore, whether it's just in your backyard, at the Desert Botanical Garden, or while birding. We never know how nature will continue to connect with us. 🌵

Emily Morris is DBG Informal Science Education Coordinator and a MAS Member

Reflecting on our Winter Odonata and Butterflies

by Bob Witzeman

And this our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.

William Shakespeare, As You Like It

Now that spring is here we can look back on the Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) and butterflies that remained to enliven our Arizona winter. While most of us are familiar with our winter bird residents and migrants, which overwinter or pass through here, Odonata and butterflies that are present here also deserve our attention.

Insects are one of the food sources of dragonflies and damselflies during the short span of time when they are not living as larvae underwater in our lakes, streams, and wetlands. Their insectivorous nature limits the survival of Odonata here, even considering our benign Maricopa County winters.

Dragonflies and damselflies spend many weeks, months, or even years underwater, and most odonate species are only out of water for a few weeks or months in the summer. Underwater, they are fierce predators and prey upon a variety of aquatic vertebrate and invertebrate life forms during the many weeks or months they reside in water.

Like butterflies, few damselflies or dragonflies are strong enough to be abroad in even the mild Arizona mid-winter. But as dragonflies go, the Variegated Meadowhawk consistently makes it through every month of the winter. Red Saddlebags were also found this past winter, probably because of the unusually high temperatures.

During my youth spent in northern Ohio, few butterflies could be found in the winter. However, the beautiful Mourning Cloak could be encountered



Painted Lady is found in all 48 states and overwinters in warmer areas such as in the desert areas of Arizona. Photo by Marceline VandeWater



The Sara Orange-Tip is one of the first butterflies to appear in the Sonoran Desert in February. Photo by Marceline VandeWater

even after the fiercest snowstorm. Because they consume nectar, Arizona's butterflies find more food sources remaining in winter.

Painted Lady and Gulf Fritillary butterflies are hearty and may be found here in the Valley, even on our coldest days, so long as there is sun. One of our earliest desert species to appear after winter is the Sara Orange-Tip. Monarch Butterflies may be seen



Red Saddlebags. This striking dragonfly is sometimes abroad in the winter, so long as there is sun. Photo by Bob Witzeman

in mid-winter along the Salt River bed in downtown Phoenix where milkweed, that species' host plant has been planted.

As when birdwatching, we are always looking for records of the latest dates for a species to be found in the winter, and for the dates when a species will depart and return, and in what numbers they will occur. Maricopa Audubon's publication, *Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County Arizona*

meticulously records the arrival and departure dates for each bird species. We look forward to the day when the same sort of publication will be available for our region's Odonata-watchers. 🦋



The Variegated Meadowhawk is one of our Valley's heartiest species, able to be out even on the coldest winter days, so long as it is sunny. Photo by Bob Witzeman

Nature Through the Artist's Eye: Kelly Leahy Radding

Kelly says:

"I grew up with a state forest in my backyard and a mother who loved gardening and birds. I was told I started drawing on the walls before I could talk, so I think it was a forgone conclusion that when I finally settled into my life's work it would be painting the natural world and all of its diverse inhabitants. Birds and plants tend to be my favorite subjects, a legacy from my mother no doubt. I love to travel, especially to out of the way wild places. I take many photographs and keep a travel/sketch journal. Many of my paintings start as sketches in my journal or an image captured in my camera. It doesn't matter if the subject is a Trogon in Costa Rica or a Bluebird in my backyard, they are equally fascinating and inspirational to me. My experiences in the outdoors are what fuel me to create, to paint, and to honor the spirit of nature. I believe in giving the 'quiet ones' a voice. I hope that my work may someday help forward the cause of conservation of animals and habitat alike.

"I paint with watercolors, gouache, oil, and egg tempera. Most recently I have been painting with watercolor on calfskin vellum. I believe that vellum bequeaths my subject matter with life, creating a living, breathing painting well beyond the sum of its parts of vellum, paintbrush, and paint. I am a member of the Society of Animal Artists, the New England Society of Botanical Artists, the American Society of Botanical Artists, and the Brooklyn Botanical Garden Florilegium.

"My favorite quote is: 'I would like to paint the way a bird sings' by Claude Monet." 🐦



A Moment of Iridescence
Watercolor on Cowley's Kelmscott calfskin vellum, 14.5" x 9.5"

I am continually reminded that the only thing I can expect out in the field is the unexpected. I believe that sometimes my subjects pick me, begging to be painted. On a vacation in Costa Rica, I went out early every morning to see what I could 'see.' One morning just after sunrise, this Black-headed Trogon flew past me and perched not far away. I hurriedly started taking photos, expecting him to fly away at any second. He remained still, letting me get closer until he turned just so, catching the early morning light on his back: magic!



Raven Greets the Sun
Watercolor on deerskin vellum, 11.5" x 8.5"

Yellowstone Park is probably top on my list of favorite places to visit. My fly fisherman husband and I go as often as we are able. We like to do early morning drives to look for wildlife and on one trip pretty much every morning there was a Raven on this burnt snag. One morning, after dropping my husband off to fish, I came upon the Raven on the snag soaking up the rising sun. It allowed me to photograph the moment, one that I will always treasure.



Common Cattail & Common Green Darner
Watercolor on calfskin vellum, 16" x 10"

My favorite time is when I am outdoors – either in some grand location or just the woods behind my house. I love the creativity of nature; the times when I see that nature really knows composition much better than I do. This cattail just had it all. I simply tried to recreate what I saw in an everyday, ordinary swamp in New Hampshire.



Tag Team

Watercolor on Cowley's veiny calfskin vellum, 22" x 16"

I had the pleasure of meeting this sibling pair of Harris's Hawks at a raptor rehabilitation center. Their magnificence inspired me to paint them but at first I wasn't sure of my composition. I researched the species, discovering that Harris's Hawks hunt cooperatively in pairs or trios. The hawks surround their prey, flush it for another to catch, or take turns chasing it. I painted the moment the right hand bird was lifting to chase the lure; a second later the other hawk flew after his brother taking his turn 'tagging' their prey. They continued in this manner, taking turns going after the lure until their handlers called them back, which they did quite reluctantly. It was a thrill to watch them hunt just as if they were in the wild. The title came easy for this piece, tag team - two or more people working in association toward the same goal, except in this instance two hawks worked together to catch their 'prey!'



Cardinal Airplant and Painted Buntings

Gouache on paper, 13.5" x 10.75"

Almost all of my paintings are of a scene that I have witnessed, sketched, or photographed. This painting is one of a few exceptions. I fervently believe in creating awareness for conservation not only for birds and animals but plants as well. I found this specimen of a Cardinal Airplant in Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, a National Audubon Society preserve. The Cardinal Airplant or Quill Leaf is endangered in Florida as a result of Mexican Bromeliad Weevil attack. I am drawn to portray native plants, especially native plants that are threatened or endangered. I wanted to paint a bird with this plant but couldn't decide which one until my best friend's mother (who lived nearby and visited Corkscrew often) told us that she usually sees Painted Buntings there. Unfortunately we didn't see any ourselves that day but I knew they existed in the same habitat and a pair would complement the colors of the plant quite nicely.

Cactus Clown

Watercolor on Cowley's veiny calfskin vellum, 11.5" x 9"

I attended an artists' workshop at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. We ate our lunch outside every day and every day the Cactus Wrens entertained us with their antics, hoping we might share some of our lunch with them. I took many photographs of them on that trip, just knowing that I had to paint one some day. I think the resident wrens began to think I was a stalker amongst them!

Maricopa Audubon Society

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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.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, Chandler or most of Mesa, 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•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 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•dition* is to become a "Friend".) For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or email chadd@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or email Scott Burge.

Submissions

Copy for *The Cactus Wren•dition* 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. Email to: *The Cactus Wren•dition* Editor, Gillian Rice: editor.wrendition@yahoo.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

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