



The Cactus Wren•dition

Volume LX, No. 4

Winter 2009



Wood Stork

Maricopa Audubon Meetings & Programs Dec. 2009 - Jan 2010

Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, September through May.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall or Webster Auditorium at the Desert Botanical Garden. The Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix,

which is approximately 1/2 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. Webster Auditorium is in the southeast section of the gardens (there is limited parking nearby for those who need it.)

A pre-meeting dinner will be held at Rolling Hills (formerly Pete's) 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue in Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) for the September through April meetings. Come and join us at 6:00 p.m. for a delicious meal (no-host), meet our guest speaker and say "howdy" to other birders. Meals average \$7.00.

December 1, 2009

Dr. David Pearson **Alaska from North to South: Birds and Wildlife** From the Arctic Ocean at Prudhoe Bay down the Dalton Highway through the Brooks Range, Denali National Park, and south to Prince William Sound and finally to the herds of Brown Bears fishing



Photo borrowed from Audubon Alaska website www.audubonalaska.org
John Schoen

for salmon at the Brooks Falls of Katmai National Park, Alaska is overwhelming with its wildlife, birds and dramatic scenery. Tourism, oil, and politics that make Arizona's legislature look tame only add to a fascinating and educational place to visit. Webster Hall

January 5, 2010

Gary Rosenberg **Birds of Manu.** Manu National Park in Southeastern Peru ranges from high-elevation Paramo to Amazonian Rainforest; it remains one of the most pristine areas in all of South America. Its richness is exemplified by a bird list of more than 1000 species, and this incredible diversity can be sampled along the Manu Road at wonderful lodges such as Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge and Amazonia Lodge, and along the Madre de Dios River at a first class jungle lodge, Manu Wildlife Center. Manu has become famous as the premier Amazonian experience, combining wonderful forest birding from treeline to the lowlands, along with an active Parrot and Macaw Clay Lick, stunning oxbow lakes with Giant Otters, and the chance of seeing more than 500 species of birds in two weeks! Gary Rosenberg has been leading bird watching tours to Peru since 1987, and has visited Manu at least 12 times. He presents a travelogue from along the Manu Road, and down the Madre de Dios River to fabulous Manu National Park.

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"Man's greatest joy is to teach the love of nature" Anon

An Investment in the Future

Bequests are an important source of support for the Maricopa Audubon Society. Your chapter has dedicated itself to the protection of the natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

You can invest in the future of our natural world by making a bequest in your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society. Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.



Wood Stork, photographed by Richard Ditch at Gilbert Water Ranch on August 18th, 2009 with Nikon D200 using a 300mm f/2.8 lens and a matched 2x converter for an effective focal length of 600mm.

By the time you read this the 14th Annual Maricopa Audubon Kathryn F. Anderson Granite Reef Asterisk's Big Sit! will be in the history books. My thanks go out to the participants—Pete Moulton, Adam and Phyllis Martin, Tom and Rosalinda Partel, and Deb Sparrow, and to all of you who supported our efforts with pledges and donations.

In September I led my annual late summer-early autumn pilgrimage (aka MAS field trip) to Page Springs, an Arizona Game and Fish Department fish hatchery near Cornville, Arizona. Adjacent to the hatchery is an IBA (Important Bird Area) initiated and maintained by the Northern Arizona Audubon Society (NAAS). Up the road about a mile is a second fish hatchery, completely different, but also run by Arizona Game and Fish—the Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery. NAAS has built a huge ramada by the hatchery. The shady road between the two hatcheries crosses over Oak Creek as the creek courses southwest out of Sedona. On this day the creek was a raging opaque stream, made reddish from the red rock sediment it picks up as it wends its way through the Red Rock Country. Just days before there had been heavy rains in the upper Oak Creek area, which had caused some flooding in and around Sedona.

The talent I had with me that day was nothing short of amazing: Mark and Ginny Horlings—longtime birders and dedicated environmentalists; Brian Ison, who had joined me on the first trip I led to Page Springs about five years ago, and who has pursued the hobby with a vengeance, was there, too. His youthful eyes spotted and identified birds that I never even saw. Fred Stewart, who also joined us, is an entomologist, and

advised us on the diverse group of insects we encountered. Mark is an environmental consultant. He identified and showed us many of the unusual plants in the area, as well as sharing with us information on the dragonflies and butterflies we came across. On top of all that, what could be more relevant than two veteran fly fishermen like Fred and Mark bantering back and forth on the sport while birding at fish hatcheries? Kerry Sagebiel, our other participant is an archeologist; she contributed a ton of information about archeological research and findings here in Arizona.

And I haven't even yet mentioned the interesting birds we saw. Green-tailed Towhees were foraging with Abert's Towhees, and we were able to make size comparisons between the two species. A Red-tailed Hawk harassed a Bald Eagle in the air above Bubbling Ponds. We were directed to a Black Hawk's nest behind the fish runs at Page Springs where the young had fledged fairly recently. One of the Black Hawks sat peacefully in a tree nearby and allowed us to observe it for quite some time without disturbing it. There are two former breeding ponds at Bubbling Ponds, which are empty and overgrown with cattails. In one we were able to get responses to my taped calls from both Soras and Virginia Rails. Usually abundant at this time of year here, we spotted just one Phainopepla; perhaps because the blackberry crop was not very bountiful.

We had 47 birds species for the day and terrific camaraderie. We also learned something that I had not known before—that a number of native fish species are being raised by AG&FD at the Bubbling Ponds Fish Hatchery.

MAS Income

Summary of the chapter's financial report for the fiscal year, ending 5/31/09.

Income

National Audubon dues share and incentive payments	\$6,238
Friends of Maricopa Audubon	5,290
Donations.....	1,217
Books & T shirt Sales	2,646
Environmental Fund of Arizona	1,034
Banquet, raffles and other fundraising	<u>3,153</u>
Total Income.....	\$19,578

Expenditures

Wren-dition	\$12,048
Donations.....	1,450
Liability Insurance	1,696
Cost of sales stock & T shirts.....	1,572
Officer & Committee Expenses	488
Telephone.....	576
Conservation	1,500
Website	219
Banquet, Raffles & Fundraising.....	1,759
CPA Review	900
Miscellaneous	<u>159</u>
Total Expenditures	\$22,367

The annual CPA review is expected to be complete in December, 2009
If you have questions, please call Mark Horlings (602) 279-2238

Ars et Scientia

Emily Morris

As many of you know and realize with the work that you do every day, there exists much more of a cross-over between art and science than most people think about in their day-to-day lives. I cannot help but think about the similarities between the two genres quite often, especially as they have long been two of my favored interests and hobbies.

During my undergraduate degree, I started out thinking that I would pursue science as a major, but after taking just one art history course, I knew I had to study both. People are generally surprised when they hear about my double-major, but I tend to think that the two areas complement each other nicely. I don't find it surprising at all that there are so many in the birding world with an artist's eye who love watching a Painted Redstart or a observing a tanager weave its hanging nest.

I addressed the complementary nature of these subjects when I chose to write my senior art history thesis on a photographer named Emmet Gowin, who had just published a book of aerial photographs focusing on mankind's impacts on the earth. The book, entitled *Changing the Earth*, includes haunting images of Midwestern irrigation circles, craters created by thousands of atomic bombs detonated for practice in the south western desert in the 40s and 50s, and scars in the earth made by hundreds of off-road-vehicles. Gowin's photographs can be seen as pure art and as a commentary on man's hand in the shaping of our own environment. I thoroughly recommend the book or even just googling the images.

The more you think about how art and science intertwine, the more it is hard to separate them. Don't both scientists and artists use imagination as an important tool in finding something new? Once you start to delve a little deeper into either of the two disciplines, more and more people emerge who straddle the two worlds.

Through art and science mankind has found two complementary ways of understanding and defining what it means to be human. I have started a blog on this very topic, and, in a shameless plug, I hope some of you will find it interesting. If you are, please visit arsetscientia.wordpress.com. I am hoping to have a section on local artists and scientists who fall into the worlds of both art and science. I know lots of you reading this now are in that category or you know someone who is. This presents such a fascinating topic and I hope to provide a forum for interesting exploration and further discussion.

On a separate note, you will see that we have included a detailed list of all the Arizona Christmas Bird Counts for this year at the end of the issue. Many thanks go out to Walter Thurber for collating and organizing all of those details. I am excited to do my first CBC in Arizona this year (my only previous one was in Montana where we saw only 23 species!). I want to encourage even the most novice birders to take part even for part of the day and I challenge the CBC veterans to see how many they can do. I'm sure there will be some really great stories to tell in our next edition.

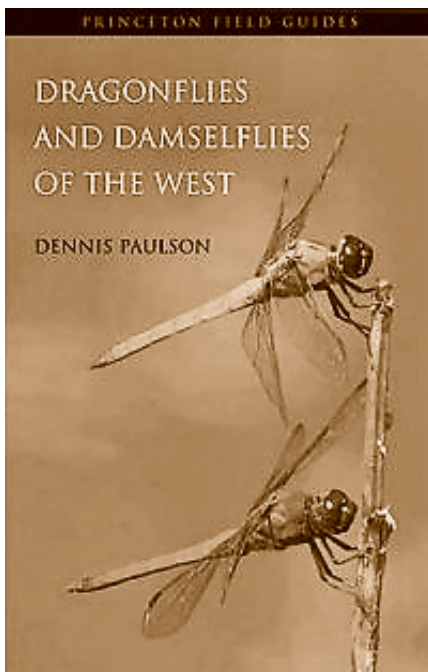
Kite Sighting



Juvenile Mississippi Kite observed and photographed by Pam Sutton on a morning walk in August of 2009, on a path that joins with The Continental Golf Course in Scottsdale. The camera used was a Nikon D80 with a 70 - 300 mm. Nikkor lens hand-held without a tripod. The sighting was confirmed with the help of experts at Wild at Heart, a conservation organization based in Cave Creek. (Examination of an in-flight photograph revealed that the first primary feather in the wing is distinctly shorter than the second primary; the bird also has the distinctive banded tail and spots characteristic of a juvenile Mississippi Kite.) "It was certainly a thrilling moment for me to see and photograph this rare bird sighting!" said Pam.

Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West

(Princeton Field Guides) by Dennis Paulson. If you are a dragonfly and damselfly enthusiast, then this recently published book is a must-have. "Dragonflies and Damselflies of the West is the first fully illustrated field guide to all 348 species of dragonflies and damselflies in western North America." Each species has a full-color photograph and extremely accurate map



to help with identification and general natural history knowledge. Maybe beginners should still use the compact *Dragonflies of California* and *Common Dragonflies of the Southwest* by Kathy Biggs, but if you want to expand, Paulson's book is the way to go.

New Bird Publication Takes Flight

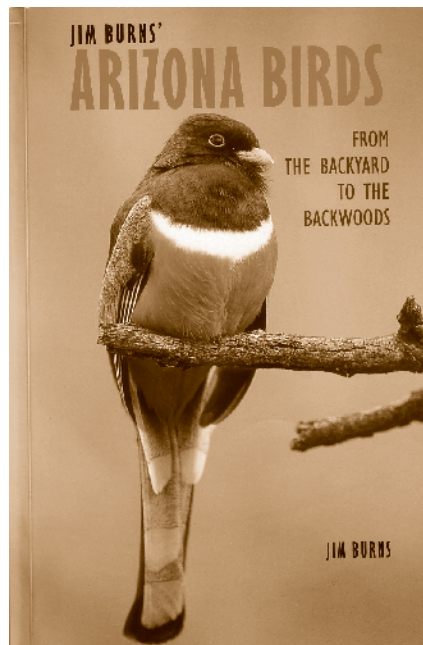
The University of Nevada Department of English has launched a new creative writing publication with a focus on birds, *The LBJ: Avian Life, Literary Arts*. This biannual publication provides a venue for quality, new work in poetry, fiction, and creative non-fiction, as well as full color art. Additionally,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

3484 or editor@literarybirdjournal.org. Subscriptions are available to individuals for \$15, or \$25 for 2 years.



Jim Burns' Arizona Birds

Jim Burns' Arizona Birds is a lively portrayal of the habits and habitats of seventy-five unique southwestern species. Burns has written much more than a field guide, site guide, or scientific survey . . . an original kind of birding book that is more at home on your bedside table than in your backpack . . . illustrated in full color by seventy-five of the author's own outstanding photographs. You can order at <http://www.uapress.arizona.edu/BOOKS/bid1948.htm> You can see more of Jim's work at www.jimburnsphotos.com



Films on the Environment

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

Flagged Shorebirds

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

Unwanted Catalogues

Is your mailbox full of unwanted mail? Catalogue works collaboratively with the catalog industry to embrace voluntary measures to reduce unwanted mail by honoring your mail preferences. Catalog Choice has become a significant consumer voice in the direct mail industry. Nearly 200 catalog mailers are participating in Catalog Choice, and this

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

E-mail Alert System

Maricopa Audubon Society has established an e-mail alert system to notify members of upcoming events and activities.

E-mail addresses

were obtained from both the "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" roster and the National Audubon roster. There were

Notes & Announcements cont.

several addresses that were returned, most likely because the e-mail addresses were not updated. If you would like to be included in or removed from this notification system, please let Laurie Nessel know at, laurie@laurienessel.com. The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

Birding Community E-Bulletin

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

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge – Belize

A new six-cabana, eco-friendly accommodation in Belize - Casa del Caballo Blanco is a 23-acre former ranch 9.5 miles from the Guatemalan border near San Ignacio. It also shelters the not-for-profit Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) <http://www.casaavian.org/>. Its purpose is to understand and support the biodiversity of Belize that attracts and sustains over 530 species of migratory and resident birds spotted in a given year. Jodi and Vance Benté, owners of the property, also established The Alliance whose motto is: "Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them continue to sow their seeds." Their work has been undertaken in cooperation with the Government of Belize's efforts to protect critical habitat, the loss of which threatens the avian population. Guests are invited to share in the responsibilities of supporting the avian program. They can assist in nest-box building, maintenance and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and

visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit www.casacaballoblanco.com.

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.)

Book Store Selections

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

Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)

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

Museum of Northern Arizona

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

Environmental Fund

Green At Work--Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about checking off "Green" choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include

environmental/conservation groups, please contact Laine Seton at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: efaz@efaz.org or (480) 510-5511.

Credit Card

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

The Dovetail Directory

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

Shade-grown Coffee

If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit www.toucanetcoffee.com for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is www.cafebritt.com. An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co--www.thanksgivingcoffee.com or 800-648-6491. And another from Kenn Kaufman is www.birdsandbeans.com

Birdwatching in Northern Italy

The fabulous Po Delta region of Northern Italy provides birding enthusiasts with a wealth of opportunities to observe a wide variety of birdlife. The region between Ravenna, on the Adriatic coast, up to

Venice, is renowned for the variety and quantity of both breeding and migratory species. The Po Delta is a wetland with features varying from sand dunes and Mediterranean bush, to ancient woods of umbrella pines, salt pans, underwater forests, open shallow lagoons, river mouths, marshes and swampy grassland. The birdlife includes, Grey, Purple, Squacco and Night Herons. Great White and Little Egrets, Glossy Ibis, Greater Flamingo, Pygmy Cormorant, Red footed Falcon, Golden Oriole, White Stork, Little Bittern, Spoonbill, Cetti's and Fan tailed Warblers, Collared Pratincole, Penduline and Bearded Tits, and Montague's Harrier. Casa di Antonio is an English-run Bed & Breakfast located in the heart of this region by Tony and Karen Ainley, who have built up good background birding knowledge of the area. The B&B is located within an hour's drive from Bologna airport. Any Audubon members will be offered a discount of \$25 per night on our advertised rates until the end of April 2010. For more details: www.casadiantonio.com or email to casadiantonio@hotmail.co.uk

A BIG THANK YOU goes out to Jack Bartley who donated dozens of first rate birding books to Maricopa Audubon Society and Arizona Field Ornithologists last September. MAS will raffle our portion of the gift at our monthly



meetings until they are gone. AZFO sold their books at their annual meeting and fundraiser last October. Kudos to Jack for his enormous generosity!

Lizards of the American Southwest (Rivo Nuevo Publishers) edited by Lawrence Jones and Robert Lovich. Lizards of the American Southwest includes over 400 color photos of all 96 species found in California, Nevada,

Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, and Texas west of the Pecos River. It also covers five Mexican states: Baja California, Baja California, Sonora, Southwest Texas and Chihuahua. This new guide includes detailed information on habitat, natural history, taxonomy, viewing tips, laws and regulations, conservation, plus illustrations, and maps. 77 experts contributed to this book making it the most comprehensive guide to lizards of the southwest. HerpDigest has a limited amount of copies autographed by the editors. Contact: asalzberg@herpdigest.org

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.

New Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center

Printed with permission from Audubon Arizona

On Saturday, October 10, the long-awaited Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center officially opened with a celebration featuring Phoenix Mayor Phil Gordon, Audubon President John Flicker, and Diane Enos, President of Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community. Since the Salt River restoration project began in 2000, the number of bird species seen on its banks has grown from a few dozen to over 200. Flycatchers, owls, roadrunners, hawks, and herons are now common sights in the area which was, for decades, a landfill. The free admission Center offers interactive exhibits, an interpretive loop trail, connections to the Rio Salado Habitat's sixteen miles of hiking and riding trails and a variety of programs, including beginning birding classes and bird walks, school field trip programs and more. Designed by Weddle Gilmore Architects, the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center is a green building; the center's sustainable features include a photovoltaic system, a waste water recycling system, low water use fixtures, pervious surfaces and bioswales to capture rain and run-off water, and energy efficient mechanical and electrical systems.



Field Trip Review

Richard Kaiser

**FORT HUACHUCA,
Sunday, June 28, 2009**

Our Audubon chapter had not been to this location in southeastern Arizona for many years, maybe since the 1980's, when we were led by Robert T. Smith, better known as "Smitty." He was best known for showing thousands of people the Spotted Owls in Scheelite Canyon. It is now nice to see a plaque honoring this great birder and "guardian" of the canyon at this trailhead.

Our group of 12 participants met inside the main gate, and after accountability and introductions, we proceeded through the grasslands. We all stopped at a road junction upon seeing a perched Red-tailed Hawk nearby. Other birds were just as notable, including a Canyon Towhee perched on a sign, Blue Grosbeak and Say's Phoebe on the road, Cassin's Kingbirds, Hooded Oriole, good views of Botteri's Sparrows (even offering pictures for some), and Gila Woodpeckers, flycatching and feeding young in a nest hole. Rain the night before in Sierra Vista may have been



Scarab Beetle. Photo Vera Markham, Sonoran Audubon.

the early-in-the-season enticement for the sparrows to perch and sing in the open. It was the first time any of us could think of seeing woodpeckers catch insects in mid-air.

We continued our drive into Garden Canyon. Walking around the Lower Picnic Area, we saw and identified Western Wood-Pewee, Western Scrub Jays, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Bewick's Wren, and Hepatic Tanager, as well as heard a Spotted Towhee,

and maybe a Black-throated Gray Warbler. At the Upper Picnic Area, we saw common species of Acorn Woodpecker, Black Phoebe, House

and Anna's. Also in the yard or visiting the variety of feeders were Greater Roadrunner, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Blue Grosbeak, Lesser



Near Garden Canyon. Photo Vera Markham, Sonoran Audubon.

Finch, and Brown-headed Cowbird, but the highlight had to be Sulphur-bellied Flycatchers, a bird not always easy to find in the Huachucas.

Although I informed the participants at the beginning of the outing about the rough road to Sawmill Canyon, not necessarily good for low-clearance cars, and the Scheelite Canyon trail being heavily wooded and offering no guarantee of Spotted Owl sightings, I think it was the talk among the participants in Upper Garden Canyon about "better" birds in other nearby locations in the Huachucas, specifically the canyons along State Route 92. So some of us spent from mid-morning till early afternoon at Mary Jo Ballator's Ash Canyon and Tom Beatty's Miller Canyon. Both properties offer bed and breakfast, but also excellent birding from a variety of feeders, especially for hummingbirds.

At Ash Canyon, the highlight had to be male and female Lucifer Hummingbirds, certainly a life species for some participants. Other hummingbirds visiting the feeders were Broad-billed, Black-chinned

Goldfinch, and White-breasted Nuthatch. A Cooper's Hawk swooped through, scaring the White-winged Doves.

At Miller Canyon, accessing the Controlled Access Site (CAS) (for a donation) was a delight with lots of hummingbird feeders also, and they attracted White-eared, Berylline, Magnificent, Broad-tailed, and Violet-crowned. The first two species are quite rare, and so were lifers for some of the five of us that were here. Tom Beatty and my wife saw a Golden Eagle high over the peak in the distance as they watched the public viewing hummingbird feeders.

Of note, also, a Rufous-winged Sparrow and a Meadowlark were seen from my car along the road leaving the canyons of Fort Huachuca. And, on Saturday, during an afternoon of scouting for the field trip in the same canyons, and including Sawmill and Scheelite, I heard Painted Redstart and American Robin, and heard Canyon Wren. It was surely a most pleasant and memorable field trip in southeastern Arizona.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

field trips

NOVEMBER 2009-JULY 2010

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

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

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

REMINDERS:

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

*Day Passes Required for National

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

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

between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes. http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/

Saturday, November 7 & 21, Sunday

Bird Walks at Boyce Thompson Arboretum. Join knowledgeable guides for walks through the Arboretum, located at Highway 60 milepost #223 near the historic copper mining town of Superior, 55 miles east of Phoenix. \$7.50 admission. Check their website for more information. <http://cals.arizona.edu/BTA/index.html>. Difficulty 1. No reservations required.

Saturday, November 7

Patagonia and San Rafael Valley Grasslands. We will leave the S.E. corner parking lot of the Tempe Library at 4:30 AM (sunrise is at 7 AM) and drive to Patagonia south east of Tucson. Along the Harshaw Creek Road we will look for flocks of Eastern Bluebirds, Mexican Jays, and wintering sparrows. As we climb up onto the San Rafael Grasslands, the habitat changes dramatically (according to legend, parts of the 1955 movie musical "Oklahoma" were filmed here). Among the ubiquitous Horned Larks and Savannah Sparrows, we will search the open grasslands for wintering Baird's Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Chestnut-collared Longspur and Prairie Falcon. If we are very lucky, we might also find McCown's Longspur and Short-eared Owl. The grasslands are often windy, and the birding can be extremely difficult (some ranchers also forbid bird watching on their parts of the valley), but on a good day some of these otherwise sneaky grassland species sit obviously on fence wires or walk in open bare patches. Depending on the weather and our luck, we will end the day at the Patton's feeders in Patagonia, where the birding is always easier, and look for any unusual species that might be there. Come prepared for cold and wind, and wear high top boots because if we take short walks through grassy areas, sharp stalks and prickly chaff quickly stick to exposed socks. Bring spotting scopes, lunch and drink. We should be back in Tempe around 5 pm. If you want to go down the day before, meet us in front of the public restrooms on 4th Ave in Patagonia at 7:15 AM. Limit: 4 cars and 15 participants. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Dr. David L. Pearson
Laurie Nessel 480.968.5614 or laurienessel@gmail.com for reservations.

Saturday, November 14

Lost Dutchman State Park. This desert park lies at the base of Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. This is a beautiful hike but steep in places. Resident species include Canyon Towhee, Rock and Canyon Wrens. Plants and fall butterflies will be noted as well.

Bring water, lunch. Scope optional. \$5 per car entry fee. Difficulty: 2.

Co-Leaders: Laurie Nessel and Mark Horlings. (602 279-2238) Mhorlings@cox.net for reservations and carpooling.

Monday, November 16

Globe/Pinal Mountain. We travel to Besh Ba Gowah in Globe to see what might show up there before heading up Ice House Canyon, stopping wherever it looks birdy on the way. Can't guarantee we'll get to the top, but we'll wind our way up the mountain looking for a variety of resident chaparral, transition zone and higher elevation birds until about 11 AM. Meet 6:00AM at the north lot of the Gilbert Regional Library, S.E. corner Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Bring lunch. Back close to 2:00. Limit 8. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Kathe Anderson, 480.951.4890 or kathe.coot@cox.net for reservations.

Wednesday, November 25

Phoenix Zoo Ponds. Meet on the zoo bridge at 7:00AM for possible Great Horned Owl sightings. We will proceed into the zoo grounds for great, upclose views of waterfowl, especially good for beginners to learn the difference between male and female ducks. We may see other zoo surprises as well. No limit. Includes admission to the zoo. Done by 10:00. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Mike Foley 602.914.4339, mfoley33@gmail.com for reservations

December 6

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Bird Walk.

Join Jim Burns for the chance to see "El Catrin," a one-of-a-kind Hybrid Hummingbird and other winter surprises. Nature walks are included with daily admission of \$7.50 for adults, \$3 for ages 5-12 (free if you have a State Parks annual pass or Arboretum membership). 8:30AM. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Scottsdale author and photographer Jim Burns

Saturday, December 19

Veterans Oasis Park. The urban wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are becoming a haven for a variety of wildlife, especially birds and insects. This guided walk 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. Children accompanied by an adult are welcome! There is a suggested \$5 donation for the Chandler Environmental Education Center. Meet 8:30AM at the Environmental Education Center. Done by 11:30AM. No reservations required. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Laurie Nessel

December-

No other trips are planned for December due to the Christmas Bird Counts. Please check the bird count listings for more information.

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips cont.

Laurie Nessel

Wednesday, January 13

Camp Creek and Seven Springs*: We will look for wintering birds and hope to find some of the unusual birds that were found during the Carefree Christmas Bird Count, perhaps a Townsend Solitaire or Cassins Finch.

*National Forest Day Pass required. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Russ Widner, 480.595.2977 or rwidner@earthlink.net for information and reservations.

Saturday, January 16

Tres Rios Area. Located at the 91st Ave. and the Salt River, this Wastewater Treatment Plant has constructed wetlands and riparian areas ranking AMong the best places for birding in the west valley. Habitats include open water, running streAM, marsh, desert and woodland which provide a good environment for ducks, shorebirds, and passerines. Sightings on previous trips were Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Least Bittern, Sora, Osprey and Peregrine Falcon. Please wear walking shoes, hat, bring water/lunch and scope if available. Difficulty 1. Limit: 15. Meet at 8:00AM at the gate to the Hayfield Site at Tres Rios.

Leader: Marceline Vandewater. Please email marceline@ermaroni.net or call 602-689-4356 for reservations and carpool information.

Sunday--Monday, Jan 17-18, 2010

Cibola National Wildlife Refuge/Salton Sea. A quick trip to the Salton Sea is better than none at all! More detailed logistics will follow for participants, but here's the outline: Leave the Phoenix area about 6:00AM, arrive at Cibola National Wildlife Refuge about 10:00AM, birding the agricultural areas in CA on the way. Leave Cibola mid-afternoon to catch the marshes at end of the day at the southern tip of the Salton Sea. Stay in Calipatria at a moderate hotel, and leave before sunrise to spend about 5 hours exploring the Sonny Bono National Wildlife Refuge and close-by areas that have been very productive in years past. Home by 6-7pm on Monday. We hope to see the Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese in great, noisy abundance, plus a wide range of waterfowl and shorebirds, and a fair number of raptors and birds of the fields. Limit 8. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Kathe Anderson, 480.951.4890 or kathe.coot@cox.net for reservations.

Tuesday, January 26

Arnette and Queen Creeks and Oak Flat. We will look for winter residents and possible rare and accidental species in this under-birded riparian area east of Boyce Thompson Arboretum. After the creeks hike, we will visit Oak Flat Campground which is threatened by being privatized and closed forever by the RCC mine. Difficulty 2. Meet 8:00AM.

Leader: Laurie Nessel laurie@laurienessel.com, 480.968.5614 for reservations and information.

Saturday, February 6

Gilbert Water Ranch. This is now the number one place for rare bird sightings in Maricopa County. The ponds and associated marsh vegetation attracts a wide variety of wintering waterfowl, raptors and passerines and whatever surprises we find. Scope helpful. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Cindy West 480.830.5332 or quetzal@cox.net for reservations and information.

Saturday, February 20

Veterans Oasis Park. The urban wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are becoming a haven for a variety wildlife, especially birds and insects. This guided walk 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. Children accompanied by an adult are welcome! There is a suggested \$5 donation for the Chandler Environmental Education Center. Difficulty 1. Meet 8:30AM at the Environmental Education Center. Done by 11:30AM. No reservations required.

Leader: Laurie Nessel

Saturday, February 27

San Pedro River. Don't miss this rare opportunity to visit Maricopa Audubon Society property at the confluence of Aravaipa Creek and the San Pedro River near Dudleyville. We will tour the property and explore nearby riparian areas along the San Pedro. Mississippi Kite, Gray Hawk, Sora and Rails are possible. Bring snack and lunch. Difficulty: 2.

Leader: Scott Burge. 480.897.8608 burge@burgenv.com for reservations and information.

Saturday, March 13

Flagstaff Lakes. On this field trip we will visit the lakes around Flagstaff looking for waterfowl and Bald Eagles. We also hope to find Red Crossbills, Cassin's Finches and Pinyon Jays. Wewill meet at Denny's Restaurant at the intersection of I-40 and I-17 at 8:00AM. Bring a lunch, water, snacks and a scope will be very helpful. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Charles Babbitt, (602) 840.1772 or cjbabbitt@cox.net for reservations

Friday, March 19

Native Flowers and Plants of the East Valley: Join us for a walk in the desert by the lower Salt River to look for wildflowers and other native plants. With staggered winter rains we should find an interesting season for flora. We will touch on identification techniques and ecology. Bring binoculars as we will be watching for typical desert birds as well (and you can use them backwards as a loupe). Limit 15. Difficulty 1. Bring snacks and water. Lunch optional.

Leader: Mel Bramley, 480.969.9893 evenings for reservations and information.

Wednesday, March 31

Agua Fria Recharge Ponds. View overwintering waterfowl, shorebirds and passerines. Migratory shorebirds here lesser yellowlegs, solitary sandpiper, willet, long billed curlew, w. sandpiper While uncommon they might be seen, including:Forster's Tern, Black Tern, California, Franklin's and Bonaparte's Gulls as possibilities. Possible shorebirds might include Solitary Sandpiper, Willet, Long-billed Curlew, Semipalmated Sandpiper, Black-bellied and Snowy Plover, and various duck, heron and egret species. Take East CAMElback Rd. to 107th Ave.

Turn north about one mile to where the road dead ends at the ponds. Difficulty 1. Scope optional. Meet 7:00AM. Done by 11:00AM.

Leader: Bob Witzeman 602.840.0052 or witzeman@cox.net for reservations.

Saturday April 3

**Peachville
Tom Gaskill**

Saturday, May 15

**Roger's Trough
Tom Gaskill**

Saturday July 10 to Sunday July 25, 2010

with Machu Picchu extension to July 28

Southeastern Peru: The Wilds of Manu (The Manu Road, Manu National Park, and Machu Picchu). There is no place that I know of in South AMerica that compares to Manu! Located southeast of Cusco, this huge National Park encompasses elevations from high ParAMo in the eastern Andes to an AMazing expanse of lowland Amazonian rainforest. The bird list for the park exceeds 1000 species, and it is one of the few truly wild places left on Earth that have huge areas undeveloped and even unexplored, with indigenous people living within the park that have never had any contact with the outside world! Despite the seeming remoteness of Manu, it is actually quite accessible by way of the Manu Road that traverses a transect from Cusco to the Amazonian Lowlands, and then along the Madre de Dios River to the Manu River. Our 16 day tour is designed to sAMple the best Manu has to offer, staying first at a small rustic lodge near treeline in the eastern Andes, then at Cock-of-the-Rock Lodge at mid-elevations, fAMous for its Andean Cock-of-the-Rock lek, then two nights at Amazonia Lodge on the Madre de Dios River, then three nights at a comfortable tent-cAMp at Cocha Salvador, up the Manu River in the heart of Manu National Park, and finally at wonderful Manu Wildlife Center, with it's fAMous Macaw clay lick nearby. This tour is unsurpassed in scenic beauty, spending virtually all the time in untouched, virgin rainforest, full of macaws, monkeys, large mAMmals, and more than 500 species of birds. The tour is not at all strenuous, with level trails and comfortable lodging. Maybe we'll even see a Jaguar! A post tour extension to incredible Machu

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips cont.

Laurie Nessel

field trips



"The" way to bird the beautiful oxbow lakes at Manu.



Red-and-green Macaws coming to a Clay Lick near Manu Wildlife Center

Picchu is also available. Cost \$4600. Cost of Machu Picchu extension \$1300.

Leader: Gary Rosenberg, Avian Journeys.
P.O. Box 91856, Tucson, AZ 85752-1856.
520-744-6780. info@avianjourneys.com,
www.avianjourneys.com

Continuing

Bird Walks at the Desert Botanical Gardens.

Mondays and second Saturdays, Oct-May.

Join expert birders for a morning bird walk along the Garden trails. Beginners are welcome. Wear a hat, sunscreen, comfortable walking shoes, and bring binoculars. Free with admission to the garden. Call 480-941-1225 for times.

Bird Walks and Boat Tours at Sonoita Creek State Natural Area.

located within Patagonia Lake State Park.
Mondays through Thursdays, October 15-
May. 5 mile bird hikes along both upland

and riparian habitats. Over 300 resident and migratory bird species inhabit Sonoita Creek and Patagonia Lake including eastern, western, and accidental Mexican species such as the Elegant Trogon, Rufous-backed Robin, and the Black-capped Gnatcatcher. Patagonia Lake Road, 7 miles west of Patagonia. \$7 entry fee per vehicle. <http://www.pr.state.az.us/Parks/parkhtml/sonoitacreeksna.html> for current schedule. Meet at the Birding Trail Trailhead. For information/reservations (required) call (520) 287-2791. Meet

2nd & 4th Saturdays

Tohono Chul Park: Ask the Plant Expert.

Ever wonder what arid-adapted plants you can purchase to attract butterflies, birds or bats? Curious about what to plant this fall to ensure spring garden color? Or what little pest is destroying your favorite plant or tree? Come to Tohono Chul Park and ask Curator of Plants, Russ Buhrow. Seek advice on plant selection, finding the perfect plants for your dream garden or get answers about under-performing backyard plants, from identifying disease or pest problems to diagnosing nutrient deficiencies and watering issues. Drop by anytime between 9AM and noon for this FREE event. Tohono Chul Park is the desert corner garden where nature, art, and culture connect. Educational programs, art, cultural exhibits, nature trails, gardens, and special events offer opportunities to experience the desert and all its treasures. For more information, please call (520) 742-6455, visit their website www.tohonochulpark.org, or in person at 7366 N. Paseo del Norte, one stoplight west of the intersection at Oracle and Ina in Tucson.

November 7, 8, 21 and 22, December

Boyce Thompson Arboretum Bird Walks.

Join a guided birdwalk for the chance to see "El Catrin," our one-of-a-kind Hybrid Hummingbird. Walks include leaders Kurt and Cindy Radamaker November 7, Kathe Anderson November 8, Rich Ditch, Cindy West & Diane Krpan November 21, , Marceline Vandewater November 22 and Scottsdale author and photographer Jim Burns leading our season finale on December 6. Recent bird sighting reports are on our website. Weekend nature walks are included with daily admission of \$7.50 for adults, \$3 for ages 5-12 (free if you have a State Parks annual pass or Arboretum membership). 8:30AM.

Local Birding: Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area

Gillian Rice



Black-throated Sparrows forage amongst the low vegetation. Black-tailed Gnatcatchers flit from branch to branch of a Blue Palo Verde, announcing their presence: psssh, psssh. On the slopes of a west-facing mesa, a pair of American Kestrels dances, their chestnut tails highlighted against the blue Arizona summer sky. One alights on a saguaro while the other chases a Gila Woodpecker. A Brown-crested Flycatcher flutes its "police-whistle" call. Kevin Smith, Interpretive



Ranger, is leading us on a hike along Cottonwood Wash in Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area.

Returning along Metate Trail, we divert along the aptly-named Towhee Trail, where numerous Abert's Towhees feed in the Mesquite Bosque. On the Audubon Watch List, Abert's Towhee is a Yellow Listed species, a designation that means 'declining or rare,' and typically of national conservation concern. Just beyond the Solar Oasis on the Metate Trail, a Greater Roadrunner picks its way among the trees. White-winged Doves, Mourning Doves, Brown-crested Flycatchers and Black-throated Sparrows drink at the constructed wildlife pond. A flash of red. A Northern Cardinal.

Part of Spur Cross Conservation Area is designated an Arizona Important Bird Area (IBA). Roughly, the IBA portion includes the Cave Creek riparian area east to the park boundary, including Cottonwood Wash. Easy to access, Spur Cross is located in the Town of Cave Creek at the edge of the Phoenix Metro Area, at the north end of Spur Cross Road, approximately five miles north of Cave Creek Road.

The habitat is diverse: riparian areas and desert scrub uplands. The riparian habitat varies from Mesquite Bosque to Cottonwood/Willow vegetation. "Depending on the winter rains, water flows in Cave Creek through the Conservation Area from about mid-December to mid-May," explains Smith. Perennial water flows in the Cottonwood/Willow habitat, where Spur Cross adjoins the Jewel of the Creek Preserve. Abundant tree cover and year-round pools attract various bird species; one is Bell's Vireo, which is Red Listed on the Audubon Watch List. Species in the Red-Listed category are 'declining rapidly and/or have very small populations or limited ranges, face major conservation threats, and typically are species of global conservation concern.'

Other Spur Cross species include Lucy's Warbler (Yellow Listed), Summer Tanager, Song Sparrow, Elf Owl (Yellow Listed), Gilded Flicker (Red Listed), and Costa's Hummingbird (Yellow Listed). A Southwestern Willow Flycatcher (Yellow Listed) was observed on April 13, 2009.

Spur Cross Ranch's IBA status has been achieved because of volunteer-conducted field surveys and compilation of data over a number of years. The observational data provided evidence to help Spur Cross meet the Audubon Society's rules for IBA qualification. "Spur Cross has statewide significance for birds," says Audubon member, Walter Thurber, who organized

the field surveys. "This means that it's an important riparian area that is more likely to be respected and protected by the public and land managers."

How can you help? Thurber encourages other Auduboners to get involved: "We need plenty of volunteers to do research studies to support IBA applications. The IBA program is an excellent program being done worldwide. For me, it's a very rewarding and meaningful activity – something that has lasting significance."

To volunteer, contact Tice Supplee, Director of Bird Conservation at Audubon Arizona at 602-468-6470 or tsupplee@audubon.org



CEDO Victorious in Sandy Beach Resorts Marina Controversy

La Huerita

cedo study

After three years of legal battles led by CEDO (the Intercultural Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans), commercial divers from Puerto Peñasco and the Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA), the Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) has determined that the Sandy Beach Resorts Marina could not be authorized to continue. Located between Sandy Beach and La Cholla, the proposed project would have altered two habitats of great ecologic and economic importance: a coastal wetland (Estero La Cholla) and the rocky reef in front of Sandy Beach.

The basis for SEMARNAT's decision was the lack of hard scientific evidence to state that the project would not have significant impacts on the environment. This ruling will stop the destruction of a shallow rocky reef that has immense ecological and social importance, including being used as a marine reserve by local commercial divers to promote sustainable fisheries, elevated levels of biodiversity, presence of several protected species and its proximity to the Upper Gulf Biosphere Reserve.

The decision affects plans for "Village E" and "Village G" of the Sandy Beach Resorts Master Plan (see image above). Included in the plan for Village E were: An External Marina, Internal Marina, Condominiums, Town Center With Retail/Commercial, Timeshares, Hotel/Health Club, Yacht Club/Restaurants, and a Beach Club. Village G, just north of Village E, would include: Large Craft Marina Residential; Small Craft Marina; Residential Lots; and a Dry Dock Boat Storage Area.

According to CEDO the the developer's plan would have impacted:

- A Marine Biosphere Reserve: The Upper Gulf of California and Colorado River Delta.
- 15 protected species, including green sea turtles, dolphins, whale sharks and scallop.
- 18 species of commercial importance, including shrimp, blue crab and octopus.
- Patterns of sedimentation on Sandy Beach.
- Currents in Cholla Bay and Sandy Beach.
- Health of adjacent waters, through the contamination associated with boats.
- The sport fishery, through increased fishing pressure.

In January of 2006, CEDO, along with researchers, fishermen, and members of the Tohono O'odham nation, petitioned the environmental authorities to not authorize the Marina project. After reviewing the analysis of the specialists and taking into account the opinions of the various interested sectors of the community, SEMARNAT determined that the project's environmental impact study was inadequate and that the project had very serious environmental and social implications. For these reasons, SEMARNAT recommended that the developer withdraw the study.

Subsequently, Sandy Beach Resorts withdrew its request and suspended the authorization process for the project. This victory for the fishing community, native peoples and the environment did not last long. The developer modified the project and renewed the application for approval of the environmental impact study.

The new proposal claimed to study the actual impacts of the new project and proposed actions to mitigate them. Nevertheless, according to CEDO, many of those improvements were not real and the mitigation actions were inadequate. For example, Sandy Beach Resorts stated that the area of the project does not include Estero La Cholla, yet they proposed to use the estero to dump the material dredged up in the construction of two marinas: a "residential" marina and a freshwater marina.

A review committee provided to SEMARNAT an evaluation of the project and recommended that it NOT be approved. Also, internationally renowned Mexican researchers, the Cooperative of Divers of Puerto Peñasco, winners of the National Conservation Award in Mexico 2003, communicated their comments and requests to the Secretary.

With SEMARNAT's new ruling against the developer, it appears that CEDO *et al* have won another victory. It remains to be seen whether or not Sandy Beach Resorts will try again.

CEDO is committed to finding ways for Puerto Peñasco to develop and grow in an orderly manner that guards its natural resources and those who depend upon them. It is indispensable that those who plan projects that affect critical habitats and/or economic activities join with all interested parties and together find a way to minimize negative impacts to the environment.

For more information, visit <http://www.cedointercultural.org/>.

Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

I began writing the Field Observations column 40 years ago, in September 1969, for *The Roadrunner* which was later re-named *The Cactus Wren-dition*. This will be my last column. I am retiring in order to have more time to update and revise *Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County, Arizona*. There have been many changes since it was published in 1997. The seasonal records of Maricopa County's birds will continue to be published, now in the Arizona Field Ornithologists online journal (azfo.org) and I will continue to compile records for those reports and for the new book, so birders can still send, call, or e-mail their sightings to me. Thank you to all the birders who, over the years, have reported their unusual sightings so that this column could be published. J.W.

JUNE, JULY, & AUGUST 2009

Abbreviations: Arizona Game & Fish Department (AZG&F), Base & Meridian Wildlife Area (B&MWA), Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Glendale Recharge Ponds (GRP), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), Morgan City Wash (MCW), Wastewater Treatment Plant (WTP).

An adult and immature Greater White-fronted Goose were observed at the ASU Research pond on the late date of 4 June (PD) and provided the first June record for Maricopa County; the adult had been present all winter and spring. An Am. Wigeon, a rare summer visitor, remained through the period at the GRP and a second individual was seen there 25 July (TC). A Blue-winged Teal was still being seen at

Tres Rios on the late date of 21 June (TDeB) and even more unusual was a pair found at the GRP on the very late date of 11 July (MHe). An adult male Redhead, a casual summer visitor, remained through the period at the GRP (TC) and four were still present at the WTP in Casa Grande, Pinal Co. 7 July (DJ). Two Lesser Scaup, also casual in summer, were reported at the Casa Grande WTP 7 July (DJ). A late-staying female Bufflehead was observed at the Gila Bend WTP 9 May – 13 June (PL); the species is rarely seen after the end of April.

Individual juvenile Brown Pelicans, uncommon late summer visitors, were reported in Avondale 5 – 7 July (JT), at Maricopa Pocana Park 8 – 18 Aug (MHa), and near Painted Rock Dam Rd., 14 Aug (PL). A **Reddish Egret** was discovered at the GRP 4 Aug (JLD); there have been 14 previous county records, all but two of them since 1997. An immature **Wood Stork** was discovered at GWR 18 Aug and remained until 11 Sep (TDeB *et al.*); the first to be recorded in the county since 1996. An immature Sharp-shinned Hawk was observed at Rio Salado on the late date of 20 June (TGa); the species is not usually seen after the end of March. The adult and juvenile Gray Hawks continued to be seen at HRP at least until 20 June (TDeB). A pair of Peregrine Falcons fledged their first young in 13 years on the County Building in downtown Phoenix 19 June (*fide* AZG&F).

Seven Clapper Rails (three adults and four young) were observed at the B&MWA at 115th Ave. (Avondale Rd.) and the Gila River 3 July (TDeB). An adult **Purple Gallinule**

was discovered at GWR 30 Aug and remained until 8 Sep (Bee Amato, MMo *et al.*), providing the first record for Maricopa County.

A Black-bellied Plover was observed at the GRP 2 – 4 Aug (MHe,TC,JLD). A Snowy Plover was reported along Citrus Valley Rd., Gila Bend 30 July (JLD). An exceptionally high concentration of at least **500** Black-necked Stilts were counted at the GRP 25 July (TC). Three Lesser Yellowlegs were observed at GRP on the early date of 3 July (TC); the species is not usually recorded before mid-July. Individual Solitary Sandpipers were found by a canal west of Phoenix 8 Aug (MHe) and at the GRP 30 Aug (DPo). A Willet was reported at the GRP 2 – 7 Aug (MHe,TC,CBab *et al.*). A **Whimbrel** was discovered at the GRP 2 Aug (MHe,TC). A Marbled Godwit was observed at the GRP 21 July – 4 Aug (MHe *et al.*).

A **Red Knot** was discovered at the GRP 7 – 19 Aug (CBab *et al.*), the first to be recorded in the county in ten years. A juvenile **Semipalmated Sandpiper** was found at the GRP 6 – 8 Aug (DPa, CBab *et al.*) and another one, or the same, was seen there 30 Aug (DPo); two were observed in Citrus Valley 14 Aug (PL), and four were found in slop ponds e. of Gila Bend 15 Aug (K&CR). A very early Least Sandpiper was observed at the GRP 14 June (TC); there were no previous records for Maricopa County before the last week of June. A Stilt Sandpiper was seen at the Palo Verde Lower River Rd. ponds 25 July (TC), between three and five were observed at the GRP 5 – 13 Aug (MHe, DPa *et al.*), and one

was found at GWR 24 – 25 Aug (L&KB,MSc). A juvenile **Short-billed Dowitcher** was observed at the GRP 8 – 15 Aug (PMo,TC *et al.*) and two were found in slop ponds e. of Gila Bend 15 Aug (K&CR).

The two pairs of **Least Terns** that were exhibiting courtship behavior at the GRP in May, nested there in June; one chick hatched from one of the nests 19 June and fledged 10 July (MHe), providing the first nesting record for Maricopa County and the state. Three of the adults and the juvenile remained at the GRP until 5 Aug (MHe,TDeB) and the juvenile was last seen there 7 Aug (TLo,BGro). Details will be published in the online AZFO Journal (azfo.org). Individual Caspian Terns, uncommon July and early fall transients, were reported at the B&MWA 3 July (TDeB) and at the GRP 3 July (TC). A Black Tern was seen at the GWR 7 Aug (TDeB). A Forster's Tern was observed at the Arlington Wildlife Area 17 June (THld), about ten days earlier than usual.

A fresh road-killed Yellow-billed Cuckoo was found in an e. Phoenix neighborhood, w. of Camelback Mt. 14 July (M. Mosby, *fide* TC); the species is rarely recorded away from its riparian woodland habitat, although one was reported in a nearby Scottsdale yard, south of Camelback Mt. a year ago in June (JBa). A N. Pygmy-Owl, an uncommon local resident in Transition Zone forests, was heard calling on Mt. Ord on three separate occasions: 14, 19, and 24 June (GN, CBab, PKI). Individual female Broad-billed Hummingbirds, uncommon visitors, were observed at Tres Rios 12 June and at the B&MWA 9 & 27 July and

28 Aug (TDeB). Another Broad-billed Hummingbird was reported at the HRP 15 Aug (DY). A male Belted Kingfisher was found at Phon D. Sutton 26 July (PMo), providing only the second July record for the county; the species does not normally return for the winter until mid to late August.

A pair of Ash-throated Flycatchers was found at a higher elevation than usual on Mt. Ord 24 June (PKI); the species is not usually found above the elevation of pinyon/juniper habitat. A very early Bewick's Wren was observed at MCW 29 Aug (TC,BIs,MV); the species is not usually recorded in the lowlands before mid-September. An Am. Robin, rare in summer, was observed in a n.e. Phoenix yard 31 July (JWz).

A Grace's Warbler was reported in a Mesa yard in late August (JMil); the species is rare in the lowlands. A N. Waterthrush was found at MCW 22 & 29 Aug (TC,TDeB,BIs,MV). A MacGillivray's Warbler was still present in a Scottsdale yard on the late date of 9 June (JBa). A Painted Redstart, a rare transient in the lowlands, was found at the Desert Botanical Garden 31 Aug (TCh,ATa).

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak, a rare transient, was observed at BTA 1 & 2 June (PWo). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported 3 Aug in a yard in Hidden Valley, s. of Maricopa in Pinal Co., where it, or other individuals, was also observed in the fall of 2005, in April 2007, and in May 2008 (NL). Two Indigo Buntings, rare summer visitors and transients, were found at BTA 4 July (CT), five were counted at Seven Springs Wash 26 July (BIs), and one was seen at

MCW 29 Aug (TC,BIs,MV).

Corrigendum: There was only one Black-bellied Plover (not two) observed 30 & 31 May near Arlington (CBab, PL).

Observers:

Charles Babbitt (CBab), Jack Bartley (JBa), Linda & Ken Bielek (L&KB), Tillie Chew (TCh), Troy Corman (TC), Tommy DeBardleben (TDeB), Pierre Deviche (PD), Jon Dunn (JLD), Tom Gaskill (TGa), Bill Grossi (BGro), Michael Hawk (MHa), Melanie Herring (MHe), Tom Hildebrandt (THld), Brian Ison (BIs), Doug Jenness (DJ), Philip Kline (PKI), Nancy Lange (NL), Paul Lehman (PL), Tyler Loomis (TLo), Jay Miller (JMil), Mike Moore (MMo), Pete Moulton (PMo), Gary Nunn (GN), Dick Palmer (DPa), Dave Powell (DPo), Kurt & Cindy Rademaker (K&CR), Myron Scott (MSc), Andre Tarby (ATa), Carl Tomoff (CT), Jolan Truan (JT), Marceline Vandewater (MV), Janet Witzeman (JWz), Paul Wolterbeck (PWo), Daniela Yellan (DY).



Toxic Mining Wastes the Size of Picket Post Mountain

Bob Witzeman



Resolution Copper says their Oak Flat ore body has the same mass as Picket Post Mtn. That huge mass of toxic waste tailings may be dumped next to Pinto Creek, a riparian treasure just upstream of Roosevelt Reservoir. Since RCC's Oak Flat is being proposed as a NEPA-exempt mine, there would be no public disclosure or oversight to inform the public of what, if any, toxic waste disposal protections and levees they might undertake to protect Pinto Creek and Roosevelt Reservoir from repeated toxic mining waste break-outs. (Bob Witzeman photo)

Human subtlety...will never devise an invention more beautiful, more simple, or more direct than does nature, because in her inventions nothing is lacking, and nothing is superfluous.

Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519)

Many have seen that imposing mountain lying just south of the parking lot at the Boyce-Thompson Arboretum. Called Picket Post Mountain, it was a lookout site for U.S. Cavalry in the 1870's. The Resolution Copper Company (RCC) says the ore body of their proposed mine at the USFS Oak Flat Campground is the same size. That mountain, rising 2200 ft. above that parking lot and over 6000 feet wide at its base has a mass of one million cubic yards.

RCC originally said they will ship the partially refined ore to Utah to be smelted. However, RCC changes their plans periodically. Since they propose to have their mine be exempted from the Environmental Impact Statement process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the public will have no idea what sort of mine is actually being planned or what will be done with its wastes and what its many environmental and cultural impacts are.

Under one version RCC has asserted that their partially refined ore would be shipped for smelting to Utah, and the

other 99% of their Picket Post mountain-sized toxic mining waste would be dumped somewhere locally. If Congress exempts the mine from NEPA, RCC does not have to reveal to the public what they will do about their toxic wastes or any of their other environmental impacts. This includes their mine's harms to the surrounding aquifers and surface waters, which they may dewater and pollute. RCC has suggested they may ship their toxic mine wastes (a physical mass amounting to 99% of the mass and size of Picket Post Mountain) by means of a ten mile tunnel/pathway to BHP's nearby riparian-situated Pinto Valley Mine and dump it there. BHP, an Australian-owned company, is a 45% partner of RCC. The other 55% of RCC is owned by the British mining giant, Rio Tinto.

BHP, and the Pinto Valley mine's Magma Copper Company predecessor, have both been operators of the Pinto Valley mine. It is ten miles east of Oak Flat. Both companies have displayed a lack of stewardship in controlling their mine's waste products and sulfuric acid leach pad sites. The *Canyon Echo*, the publication of the Grand Canyon Chapter of the Sierra Club, in March 1998 pointed out: "In 1993 flood waters at the Pinto Valley Mine near Globe topped a pile of mining waste, tore out a levee, and carried hundreds of tons of copper tailings into Pinto Creek." Magma paid fines of

Toxic Mining Wastes the Size of Picket Post Mountain

Bob Witzeman

conservation

"over \$625,000 to Arizona and the EPA and spent \$15 million in clean-up costs."

The *Echo* continued, "At that time Magma officials claimed they had made extensive changes in the mine's formation to ensure that a spill wouldn't happen again. Lee Browne, who was the general manager for the mine in 1993 said, 'We've designed and engineered some pretty neat things that in my opinion will eliminate any cause for concern about Pinto Creek in the future.'"

However, only four years later, Oct. 22, 1997 (see photo), there was another tailings blow-out and contamination of Pinto Creek. This time it was under the mine's new (Australian) ownership: Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP). As mentioned above, Rio Tinto (British) is the 55% partner of the RCC mine. Both companies (the world's two largest mining companies) have horrendous third world human rights and pollution records. Their proposed desecration of Apache sacred lands and destruction of the Devil's Canyon ('Gaan Canyon' to the Apache) riparian masterpiece come as no surprise.

Their levee's pollutant breakout was estimated to extend through 1500 feet of Pinto Creek and was 20 feet wide and 20 feet deep. Six species of fish are found at Pinto Creek along with many native birds (including endangered Bald

Eagles and Willow Flycatchers), reptiles, and mammals. Harm also lies in the fact that the toxic mining waste piles of copper, arsenic etc. flow directly into the drinking water of metropolitan Phoenix, namely via Roosevelt Reservoir.

Just upstream of BHP's Pinto Valley mine is another mine, Cambior, which has scoffed at citizen requests during the NEPA process for 100-year flood proof levees surrounding their toxic sulfuric acid leaching pads.

One may now better understand why RCC has spent millions lobbying and contributing to Congressional candidates and even environmental organizations including The Nature Conservancy, Audubon Arizona, and others, to keep their mine from being subject to the public oversight which NEPA would provide.

It is evident why these two scofflaw foreign mining companies want to evade our U.S. environmental laws. The bill they are attempting to push through Congress exempts them from NEPA, arguably our nation's most important environmental law. NEPA was enacted by Congress in 1969. Since that time 183 mining companies have faithfully undergone NEPA's public transparency and oversight reviews. Why should RCC suddenly become the mining industry's first exception to our nation's most fundamental environmental law?



In 1997 tailings from the BHP mine's sulfuric acid leach pads containing highly toxic chemicals broke out and slid into Pinto Creek. 264,000 cubic yards of waste was buried for about one-third of a mile in that stream at levels up to 40 ft. in depth. The spill surprised many, as reparations of the mining company's unstable toxic waste tailings had already occurred at that site following a 1993 spill there which traveled down Pinto Creek and on to Roosevelt Reservoir. (Don Steuter photo)

Arizona Christmas Bird Count Schedule [2009-2010]

By Walter Thurber

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond will take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird species and individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive ornithological database that enables monitoring of winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

Participants are typically assigned to teams based on their bird identification skill level and endurance. Many counts hold a compilation dinner at the end of the day where results are tabulated and stories shared. A \$5.00 participation fee defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the overall count results. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one that interests you and contact the compiler for more information.

Date	Day	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	E-Mail
12/14	Mo	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-837-2446	kurtrad@mexicobirding.com
12/18	Fr	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251 x108	bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov
12/18	Fr	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	tomoff@northlink.com
12/18	Fr	Saint David	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/19	Sa	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Curt McCasland	520-387-4992	curtis_mccasland@fws.gov
12/19	Sa	Avra Valley	Mary Lou Cole	520-578-0114	birdingnana@msn.com
12/19	Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-210-6474	henrydetwiler@earthlink.net
12/19	Sa	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022	elaimorr@npgcable.com
12/19	Sa	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778	seetrogon@comcast.net
12/19	Sa	Pipe Spring Natl. Monument	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105	andrea_bornemeier@nps.gov
12/19	Sa	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221	tedmouras@mindspring.com
12/19	Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629	batesd@cox.net
12/20	Su	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-636-4916	russell.duerksen@azbar.org
12/20	Su	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012	hassayampacbc@hotmail.com
12/20	Su	Jerome-Cottonwood	Betsy Feinberg	928-203-0676 x11	azbirder@gmail.com
12/20	Su	Tucson Valley	Larry Liese	520-743-3520	larryliese@prodigy.net
12/21	Mo	Elfrida	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/21	Mo	Phoenix-Tres Rios	David Powell	602-441-5508	vireo@vireos.com
12/26	Sa	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Terry Blows	928-774-8028	terence.blows@nau.edu
12/26	Sa	Superior	Cynthia Donald	480-283-4515	planres@earthlink.net
12/27	Su	Patagonia	Abbie Zeltzer	520-604-6320	amindajar@gmail.com
12/28	Mo	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187	aplomado@cox.net
12/28	Mo	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Michael Marsden	520-269-6240	birdanza@cox.net
12/29	Tu	Havas NWR	DeeDee DeLorenzo	928-758-2707	poncho@citlink.net
12/30	We	Bill Williams River NWR	Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144	kathleen_blair@fws.gov
12/30	We	Carefree	Walter Thurber	480-483-6450	wathurber@cox.net
1/2	Sa	Appleton-Whittell	Robert Weissler	520-803-0794	weissler@aves.org
1/2	Sa	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	d_jenness@hotmail.com
1/2	Sa	Portal	Jackie Lewis	520-558-2287	winjac12@vtc.net
1/2	Sa	Sedona	Dottie Hook	928-204-1894	dottiehook1@aol.com
1/2	Sa	Sierra Pinta-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Curt McCasland	520-387-4992	curtis_mccasland@fws.gov
1/3	Su	Atascosa Highlands	Rich Hoyer	520-325-5310	birdernaturalist@me.com
1/3	Su	Camp Verde	Anita MacFarlane	928-282-4063	ajmac@macfarlanes.us
1/5	Tu	Page	John Spence	928-608-6267	john_spence@nps.gov
Unknown		Payson	Dave Hallock	303-258-3672	eldoradh@rmi.net
Unknown		Timber Mesa	Unknown		

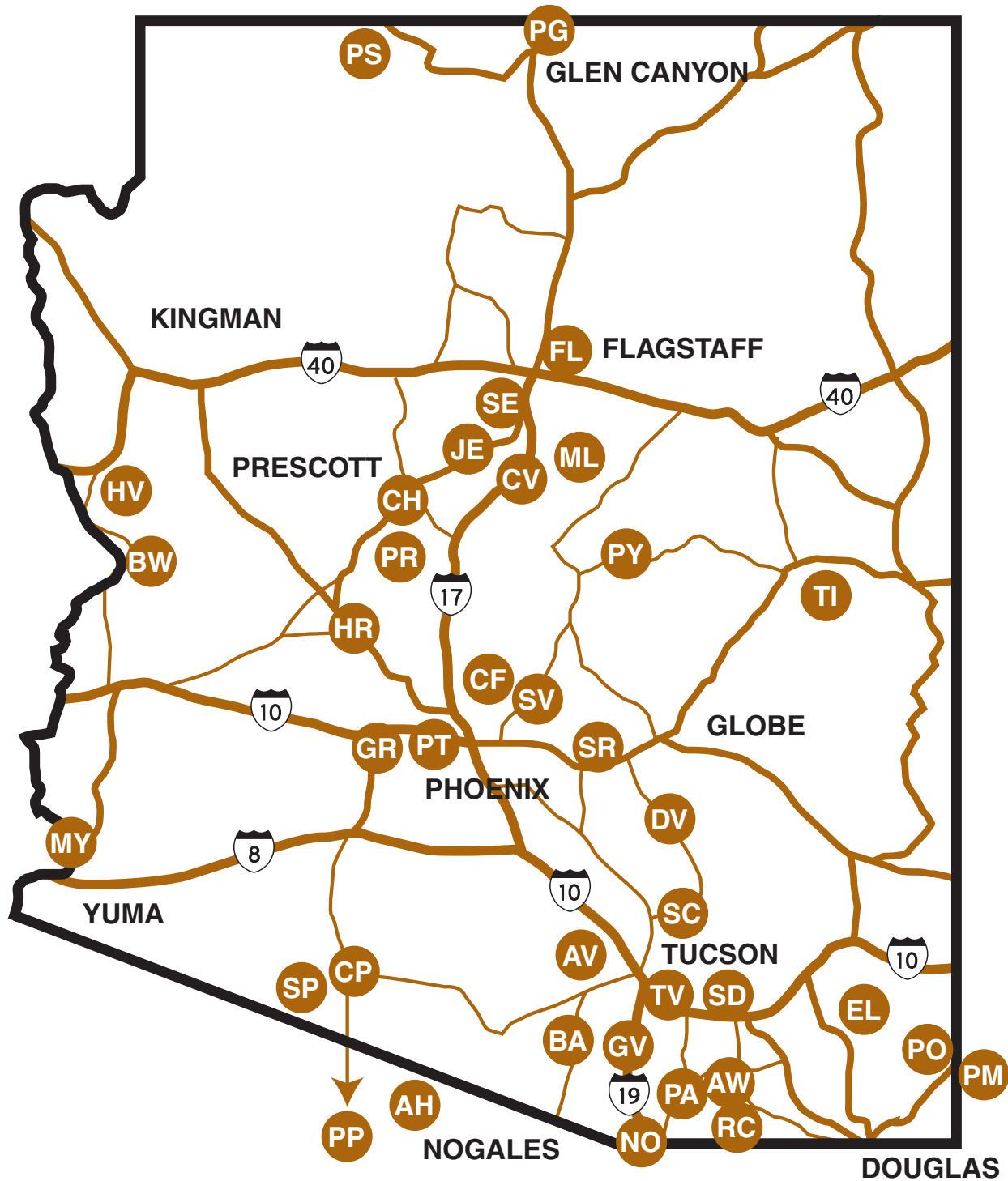
Other Nearby Counts

12/19	Sa	Puerto Penasco, Sonora, MX	Steve Ganley	480-830-5538	sganley@cox.net
1/3	Su	Peloncillo Mountains, NM	Unknown		

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Christmas Bird Count Map

cbc map



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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**dition by mail:

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to 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 e-mail CHADD@audubon.org. For all other membership questions call or e-mail 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. E-mail to: The Cactus Wren*dition 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**dition may be reprinted on other newsletters as long as the material is credited to the original author and to *The Cactus Wren**dition.

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