



The Cactus Wren·dition



Volume LXVII, No. 4

Winter 2013-2014



Lincoln's Sparrow

Photo by Matt VanWallene

Programs

December 3 2013

Brazil with David and Diane Reesor

From the highlands to the wetlands of the Pantanal, Serra das Araras, Itatiaia, Ubatuba and Iguassu Falls, the Reesors' adventures and stunning photography are always captivating. Combining wildlife and culture, the Reesors' programs imbue a true sense of place.

NOTE: This program will be held at Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N 64th St., Scottsdale, AZ 85257 (northwest corner of 64th St. and Oak, about a mile north of the Desert Botanical Garden).

January 7 2014

Thomas R. Van Devender and Ana L. Reina Guerrero

Biodiversity in the Madrean Archipelago in Sonora, México

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"One touch of nature makes the whole world kin"

William Shakespeare

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.

The Madrean Archipelago Biodiversity Assessment (MABA) program was created by the Sky Island Alliance in 2009 to document the flora and fauna of the Sky Islands between the northern Sierra Madre Occidental in Chihuahua and Sonora and the Mogollon Rim for conservation, research, and education. We will learn about the MABA database, which is linked to the Southwest Environmental Information Network, and includes information on 29,579 herbarium specimens and 134,625 animal records. The MABA database is the most comprehensive source of biological records for the Madrean Archipelago and Sonora, and continues to grow through new data acquisitions and targeted biodiversity expeditions.

Thomas Van Devender, manager of the MABA project at Sky Island Alliance, has published over a hundred research articles on desert grassland, the cacti of Sonora, the Sonoran desert tortoise, packrat middens and the paleoecology of the southwestern deserts. He has collected over 25,000 plant specimens from throughout Sonora and the southwestern U.S.

**Webster Auditorium,
Desert Botanical Garden**

February 4 2014

Mary Rose

Rowing the Pacific for Birds

A passion for birds and their conservation can take you to places you never even dreamed you would go. June 7, 2014 Mary Rose will be embarking on the adventure of a lifetime. Starting from Monterey Bay, CA, Mary will row nearly 3000 miles across the Pacific to Honolulu, HI as part of the Great Pacific Race to raise funds for bird conservation projects. Get a behind the scenes tour of everything required in order to do this race and learn exactly why Mary is compelled to do this for birds. See the development of the awareness campaign, training, and an early look at video that will be part of the documentary about Mary's race.

Mary is the founder of the Chirping Central Conservation Fund, a 501(c)3 organization dedicated to supporting avian conservation. An Australian "import," Mary permanently relocated to Arizona in 2004. When she arrived in the United States she already had an interest in conservation for birds, but with increased access to conferences and other educational resources her interest grew stronger and stronger. So much so that in



2010 she quit a very nice fulltime job so she could devote extra time to conservation activities. Mary is Secretary for Maricopa Audubon Society and President of the Arizona SeedCrackers Society. In addition to operating her own accountancy practice and Chirping Central, she is active in many avian related conferences around the United States. See more at ChirpingCentral.com and MaryRows.com.

**Webster Auditorium,
Desert Botanical Garden**

March 4 2014

The Odonata Files with Jim Burns

In August 2011, while getting bored waiting for Common Black Hawks to return with food for two hatchlings in a nest he had staked out, Jim Burns looked for the very first time in five plus decades, since high school biology class, at a dragonfly. Through his camera lens he was amazed at the color and detail he was seeing on such a small package of nature. He was instantly hooked and is happy to report Odonata photography is the first stage of his second childhood.

Webster Auditorium, Desert Botanical Garden



© Jim Burns

Calico Pennant by Jim Burns



On the Cover: Lincoln's Sparrow

Focal Length: 300mm, 1/200 sec, f/13, ISO 400, November 2010
Gilbert Water Ranch by Matt VanWallene

Matt says: Wintering birds make November through January even more fun than just the great temperatures. Many hawks, ducks, warblers, geese, and sparrows are here for just a few months and make a walk through Gilbert Water Ranch extra special.

President's Message

By Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

Winter in the Sonoran Desert of Central Arizona is something of a misnomer: we seldom have a hard frost and we don't have to worry about frozen plumbing or shoveling snow. Instead, our fall season extends to an early spring before it gets hot once again! Nevertheless, the "winter" season here brings us snowbirds of at least two varieties—wintering feathered ones as well as some of our members who are fortunate enough to escape the Valley's summer heat. Welcome back!

We have a lot to look forward to this winter. For example, our MAS Program Chair, Laurie Nessel, has assembled an outstanding set of presentations for our monthly meetings. Why don't you make plans now to attend each first Tuesday in the month! Even if you have never come to a meeting before I'm certain that you will feel right at home the first time you do. You will be surrounded by others who feel, as you do, that the natural world is worth exploring, worth sharing, and worth protecting. And, we're friendly—I can almost guarantee that you will make a friend or two.

Second, December brings Christmas Bird Counts, across Arizona and throughout North America. I hope that you will participate this year in at least one CBC. You do not need to be an expert to contribute, and this year there is no \$5 participation fee! See the list of Arizona counts elsewhere in

this issue and contact the leader of a CBC of interest to you.

Late in the winter we will be holding a special Nature Photography Workshop to help our members learn easy and useful techniques to capture the beauty of nature and share it with others. Look for more details about this exciting event in a future issue of the electronic *MAS Update* newsletter. If you do not currently receive the MAS Update, just email Laurie Nessel to be added to the list. Incidentally, we never sell or otherwise distribute our members' email addresses the way some organizations do to raise funds.

I look forward to seeing you in the field, at a monthly meeting, or at the Nature Photography Workshop! 🐦

Letter from the Editor

by Gillian Rice



Gillian Rice

Welcome to the Winter issue! Jam-packed with conservation, science, and fun: words that reflect Maricopa Audubon's values.

We have updates on conservation efforts relating to Oak Flat along with a warning of the danger to the San Pedro riparian area. Research reported in Science Corner investigates this concern.

We learn how conservation work like bird banding can help support bird populations. You too, can be involved, as a citizen scientist. For a chance to observe bird-banding, and maybe even train to help, check out the events program for Hassayampa River Preserve near Wickenburg. Laurie Nessel guides us to a

tortoise research opportunity, as she reports on the fun she and her companions enjoyed on her MAS tortoise field trips. Soon, you can assist with Christmas Bird Counts – go to page 16 and choose the one you'd like to join. And support MAS by donating to our Big Sit! Two of our members write about their visit to Liberty Wildlife, another organization that gives you a chance to participate and help birds.

Auduboners tend to be travelers. Poet David Chorlton shares a memory of his journey to Costa Rica. Mary Rose updates us on her preparations for her travel adventure of a lifetime. Please help her reach her fund-raising goal.

What of those of us who must remain at home? The backyard has much to offer as we learn from members' tales in this issue. And artist Linda Feltnier dedicates herself to portraying our Arizona wildlife in realistic and beautiful ways.

As for me, I'm planning a trip home to Yorkshire, England where I hope to have some special nature experiences this autumn in my parents' traditional English garden, complete with pond, fruit trees, herbaceous border, and enormous Beech tree. Did you know that the European Starling, although seemingly more and more abundant in the Valley (much to some birders' dismay), has declined considerably in Northern Europe and is red listed as a bird of high conservation concern? So, I'll enjoy my starling sightings back in Yorkshire. 🐦

Notes & Announcements

New Wild Birds Unlimited nature shop

Wild Birds Unlimited (owner: Josh Horsman)
7001 N. Scottsdale Road, Suite 174
Scottsdale, AZ 85253
480 306-5153

Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival, January 17-20, 2014

Join Morro Coast Audubon Society (MCAS) for the 18th Annual Morro Bay Winter Bird Festival. Located on California's scenic Central Coast, Morro Bay is an important stop on the Pacific Flyway and one of the country's pre-eminent birding spots. The area is recognized worldwide for its diversity of both resident and wintering birds, and at last year's festival, over 200 species of birds were identified. Local and national birding experts lead a variety of field trips and workshops. Field trip group sizes are limited to maximize spotting and identification opportunities. The festival also offers workshops aimed at sharpening your birding skills, as well as evening programs with outstanding speakers. The keynote speaker Saturday January 18 will be Garrett Kimball, Ornithology Collections Manager at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County. He will present a program entitled "But It Doesn't Look Like the One in the Book." To register and for more information about the Festival, see www.morrobaybirdfestival.org. Registration starts November 2. The deadline is January 6, 2014 but early signups are encouraged as the most popular events fill up quickly.

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.

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, Nathaniel Smalley.
- 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>

Friday November 22

Fountain Hills Lake and Rio Verde Ranch

We hope to enjoy the wide variety of winter waterfowl at the lake (usually including Eared Grebe, but when we're really lucky, perhaps Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, and Western Grebe) before heading over to Rio Verde for an entirely different habitat which usually promises Ladder-backed Woodpecker, Bewick's Wren, and other desert and riparian species. Cedar Waxwings and American Robins are unusual there, but sparrows and Vermilion Flycatchers are not! We'll start at Fountain Hills about 7:00 am and end there about 11:00 am. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson Kathe.coot@cox.net

Sunday December 1

Veterans Oasis Park

The wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of urban wildlife. Join an experienced naturalist for a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. Bring binoculars, water, and wear good walking shoes and a hat. The walks are leisurely and the terrain is easy. Suggested \$5 donation to the Chandler Environmental Education Center. Meet at the Red-Tailed Hawk Pavilion at 8:30 am. Done by 10:00 am.

Leader: Laurie Nessel

Monday December 9

Arlington

Agricultural fields west of Phoenix that are reliable for Burrowing Owls, diurnal raptors, sparrows, and common desert species, plus waterfowl at canals and farm ponds. This is a long morning, starting at 6:30 am in Tempe and wrapping up around 1:00 pm. Lunch plans to be determined. Mostly car birding. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson Kathe.coot@cox.net

Thursday-Sunday January 16-18

Bosque del Apache

We'll start about 6:30am from Scottsdale, head to Payson for some early morning

birding in that area, then go east on 260 and 60, birding along the way in Arizona. We'll arrive in Socorro at the end of the day, and stay there for 2 nights in a moderate hotel, launching to Bosque del Apache, for all day on Friday, staying for the dusk fly-in of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese that is not to be missed. We'll start Saturday at the Bosque, and leave the area to time a lunch stop at Pie Town, near the Continental Divide. We'll stop at a couple of promising birdy areas on the return trip just to stretch a bit. Return to Scottsdale about 7:00 pm. Birds should include high elevation winter birds such as Hairy Woodpeckers, Steller's Jays, nuthatches, and bluebirds, plus vast flocks of wintering waterfowl and raptors at Bosque del Apache. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson

Kathe.coot@cox.net

Wednesday January 29

Pima Canyon, South Mountain Park, Phoenix

Entering from the east, in Pima Canyon, we will hike up the road to the stone ramadas, then up the wash 0.4 mile to the west until reaching an area that has Elephant Trees that may hold wintering Gray Vireos. South Mountain is the northernmost location for Elephant Trees in Arizona. There is a ledge there where Great Horned Owls often roost. It would be on a gently-sloping road, up a sandy wash, and then up the side of a steep hill. A hiking trail comes within 100 feet above the trees, so an alternative would be hiking up that trail, and then descending down past the trees into the wash for the return trip. Bring a hiking staff, sturdy shoes, and water. Limit 8.

Leader: Larry Langstaff

larrylangstaff1@gmail.com

Monday February 3

Tempe Town Lake

This is a great way to start the week, with a short walk along the backside of Tempe Marketplace, then a short drive to the pedestrian bridge over the Salt River near Tempe Center for the Arts, to get a different perspective. We'll start about 7:30 am, and wrap up by 10:00 am, with the hope of seeing a variety of waterfowl, a few shorebirds, osprey, a handful of common desert species, and perhaps a couple of surprises. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson Kathe.coot@cox.net

Wednesday February 5

Higley Road/Ocotillo Road Recharge Ponds

I have been visiting the Higley Road/Ocotillo Road recharge ponds almost monthly for the last two years. This site has flat gravel or dirt roads to walk along. Most of the usual wintering waterfowl will be there, and I have seen some good migrants, too. This site is not visited by very many people. It's under the Roosevelt Water Conservation District's control, has a signed parking lot, and I have never had any hassles there. One time I saw two employees and they just waved at me as they drove off. Limit 8.

Leader: Larry Langstaff

larrylangstaff1@gmail.com

Wednesday-Saturday February 5-8

Winter In Yellowstone Photography Workshop
Together we will enjoy working in the world's best classroom, Yellowstone National Park. More than just a photography workshop, this is a trip where you'll create images and memories that last a lifetime. During this time of year, Yellowstone becomes a virtual winter wonderland and is completely transformed by the snowy landscape. Embrace the beauty of the season as we travel throughout the park in the comfort of our own deluxe, 13 passenger heated Snow Coaches! Plenty of 'hands on training' from myself and other top professional instructors; also classroom/critique time throughout the workshop. We've taught over 4,000 students in the past 4 years and keep a low student to instructor ratio, allowing you all the personalized attention you want. We'll teach you how to make award-winning images surrounded by amazing scenery and wildlife and ensure that you have a truly unforgettable experience. If you haven't seen Yellowstone in the winter... you haven't seen Yellowstone. PRICE: \$1,199 single. \$999 second person (double occupancy). Details at www.NathanielSmalley.com/instruction

2NathanielSmalley@gmail.com

Sunday February 16

Veterans Oasis Park

The wildlife habitats at Veterans Oasis Park are a haven for a variety of urban wildlife. Join an experienced naturalist for a guided walk that explores the plants and animals of the park's desert and wetland habitats. Bring binoculars, water, and wear good walking shoes and a hat. The walks are leisurely and the terrain is easy. Suggested \$5 donation to the Chandler Environmental Education Center. Meet at the Red-Tailed Hawk Pavilion at 8:30 am. Done by 10:00 am.

Leader: Laurie Nessel

Saturday March 15

Flagstaff Area Lakes

Meet at 8:00 am at Denny's Restaurant on south Milton Road north of the intersection of I-40 and I-17. Bring a lunch and warm clothing. Will look for waterfowl on the lakes and may see species like Red Crossbill and Pinyon Jay. Contact leader in advance to reserve. Minimum of 6 people required.

Leader: Charles Babbitt, 602 840-1772 or cjbabbitt@cox.net

Friday March 21

Payson

I have so enjoyed the Payson Christmas Bird Count that I hope to share some of the great birds we usually see—but when it's a little warmer—including mergansers and Wood Ducks, Scrub and Steller's Jays, juncos, Acorn Woodpeckers and Red-naped Sapsuckers, titmice, and whatever else shows up. We'll leave Fountain Hills about 6:00 am, have a bag lunch in Payson (unless it's predicted to be really cold, then we'll probably look for a good restaurant), and return by about 2:00 pm. Limit 8.

Leader: Kathe Anderson Kathe.coot@cox.net

Allen's Hummingbird

By Matt VanWallene



Allen's Hummingbird.
Photo by Matt VanWallene.

For the last five years I've been photographing hummingbirds at my backyard feeder. My aim is to capture a bird at the correct angle so that all its age and gender characteristics are evident, or as said in "hummer speak," a tail shot. Unless it's a mature male, the gender or even species of a hummingbird is notoriously difficult to distinguish.

Many hatch year (HY) males look like their mothers or sisters but there are always subtle differences. That these differences cannot be determined via casual observation fuels my photography obsession. My goal is to get a male and female after hatch year (AHY) and HY tail shot for each of the species that frequent my yard. After over 14,500 shots I have accomplished that for Anna's and Black-chinned Hummingbirds but am missing the AHY female for Rufous Hummingbird.

On August 11, I got a picture of what I thought was the elusive female. When I sent the picture to friends, I learned it was a female AHY Allen's Hummingbird. I submitted the bird information to the Arizona Bird Committee (azfo.org) and they accepted it as the first recorded Allen's Hummingbird in Maricopa County, as confirmed by Richard Hoyer, George West Ph.D., and Kelly Bryant (Texas). 🐦

Becoming an Amateur Birdwatcher

By Carol Langdon

My husband and I have always been casual observers of birds. When I search my memories, birds are always there. The cooing of the Mourning Dove on a sunny Arizona day. The tap, tap, tap of a Cactus Wren checking out the windows while looking for something new... always exploring, always curious. The armies of house sparrows, hopping around, proudly displaying their rank and station on their chests. A hummingbird looking in the window trying to get my attention to make sure I filled the feeders. The lonely song of the Northern Mockingbird keeping me up on a bright moonlit summer desert night.

Yes, birds have always been a part of my life, but it has only been recently that my husband and I have decided to become amateur bird watchers. This is in large part due to the wonderful lectures and field trips the Maricopa Audubon Society offers. Thanks to these, (and the Sibley Field Guide), we now spend more time trying to decide if that bird was a Chipping Sparrow, a White-crowned Sparrow, or some other little brown bird, than we do discussing dinner.

During this past summer, our latest endeavor has been enjoying the wildlife in Munds Park, just outside Flagstaff, while spending time at the family cabin. For years, we have fed and enjoyed the many different types of birds and their antics; but now that we are amateur birdwatchers, we decided to see how many different types of birds we could find. The first thing we did was gather together all the necessary equipment we would need: binoculars, *Sibley Field Guide*, *Birds of Arizona* field guide... and then the hard part, we built a bird blind. Okay, we didn't actually build a bird blind; we just walked out on the front porch, pulled up a table, two chairs, a bottle of wine,

two glasses, and sat down and watched what flew by. Some of our favorites that we've been able to identify have been the Northern Flicker, Mountain Chickadee, Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches as well as the Scrub and Steller's Jays. At dusk, we often see the swallows flitting overhead catching bugs and we occasionally catch glimpses of water birds such as cormorants and Great Blue Herons heading back to their favorite roosts.

In late July, after watching the Broad-tailed and Rufous Hummingbirds compete over the two feeders on the porch, and being inspired by the tales of hundreds of hummingbirds at the annual hummingbird festival in Sedona happily sharing feeders together, we decided to experiment. The first night, we put out three extra feeders. In the morning, instead of finding hummingbirds happily sharing the food, we found one male Rufous Hummingbird guarding all the new feeders. Small – but ferocious – he claimed his three feeders by sitting between two of them and watching the third. Since he wasn't sharing, we moved the feeders around. He only saw this as a challenge and made his displeasure very clear to us by perching on the railing and sticking his tongue out at us. My husband decided to go to war with the little male hummer and put out more feeders: a total of 12 in a 10 x 25 feet space. This didn't faze the little guy whatsoever, since he always knew which three feeders were his.

We saw up to 20-25 hummingbirds at a time and did eventually get 3-4 birds on a feeder at once. We saw several types of hummers but had difficulty identifying all of them. As the weather begins to cool, we are noticing less bird life but look forward to next year. 🐦

Tales From The Field (cont.)

Stewart Mountain Desert Tortoise Quest

By Laurie Nessel

By the time this Wren•dition reaches you, they will be sequestered in their burrows, hidden from view. But on two occasions last summer, hardy hikers set out at dawn in search of the Sonoran Desert Tortoise during its peak activity season.

Sonoran Desert Tortoises are paradigms of conservation. They conserve energy, leading long, slow lives mostly hibernating or estivating. They conserve water, relying on reserves stored in their bladder to last through dry spells of a year or more. About 40 percent of a tortoise's weight is water, which is recirculated until fresh water can replace it. Although desert tortoises have



A pair of Sonoran Desert Tortoises in Summer
Photo by Laurie Nessel

been studied for decades, we still have much to learn. They can outlive their researchers, making it difficult to acquire a life history. While mounting evidence reveals that tortoises take advantage of winter rains [see sidebar], low temperatures usually keep them hunkered down in their burrows. But tortoises are more active and easier to observe during monsoon rains. They leave their shelters and seek fresh water from known puddle sites, damp soil, and catchments. Proficient excavators, they will trench the desert floor to expedite water retention. They can extract water from soil through their nares. They flush concentrated urine and excess potassium salts from their bladder, which allows them to feed on senescent plants until fresh summer annuals are available. The proportion of water a tortoise consumes to replenish its reserve is equivalent to a 150 pound person drinking 2-5 gallons at once.

On Sunday, July 28, Neal Baltz spotted the first tortoise, facing a burrow shaded by a Palo Verde tree. As we gathered to observe,

Neal says nonchalantly: "There're two." Sure enough, a second tortoise quietly appeared at the entrance, facing the first tortoise a foot away. A male had come calling for the female and she responded. We left them alone to settle the issue. We spotted Reakirt's Blue butterfly and Russet-tipped Clubtail dragonfly before spotting our third tortoise of the day, a young adult female resting in a boulder outcropping.

Seven of us ventured out on September 8. The stifling summer heat was kept at bay by an overcast and sporadically drizzly sky. Torrential rain seen from the foothills of Stewart Mountain soaked the Valley of the Sun. Propitious weather! Excitement dispelled the lethargy of sleep deprivation.

Following a deeply eroded horse trail, we worked our way up the ridgeline and soon had our first reptile sighting, a Western Patch-nosed Snake found by Patricia Beitzinger. Shortly after that I spotted a juvenile tortoise at the entrance to a burrow, who didn't appreciate all the unwanted attention and retreated back into its burrow. Farther along, Neal Baltz called out another find. We gathered to observe an adult female sheltered by an undercut boulder. About 15 feet closer to us, I

noticed another tortoise, a male attracted to the female.

We worked our way around the summit where I found our fourth tortoise of the day, a large male glistening in the open. Our fifth and last tortoise, another male in the open, took many more man hours to locate but we also added a Tiger Rattlesnake to our sightings and returned to the vehicles tired

To volunteer for fieldwork on juvenile tortoise surveys, contact Audrey Owens, Arizona Game and Fish Department, aowens@azgfd.gov, 623 236-7504.

but satisfied. If you would like to join us for the 2014 season, write laurienessel@gmail.com or call 480 968-5614 to be contacted on short notice for future tortoise quests. Hikes are moderate to difficult for hot, humid weather and steep, rocky slopes. Fair warning: the frisson of finding your first wild tortoise is addicting! 🐢

In an article, "Winter activity of the Sonoran Desert Tortoise (*Gopherus morafkai*) in Central Arizona" to be published in *Chelonian Conservation and Biology*, March 2014, Brian K. Sullivan, Roy Averill-Murray, Keith O. Sullivan, Justin R. Sullivan, Elizabeth A. Sullivan, and J. Daren Riedle report on their observations of adult, juvenile, and hatchling tortoises during November, December, January, and February at three field sites in upland Sonoran Desert (Union Hills, Sugarloaf, and the Florence Military Reservation). This occurs even at low temperatures (46°-59° F) At one site, all 36 individuals under observation emerged from hibernation to drink during the first heavy rainfall event in December.

At all three sites, the researchers observed females active (basking, foraging) during winter much more frequently than males. Ovarian follicles of Sonoran Desert Tortoises do not mature until after a female has left hibernation, and maturation is dependent on the availability of spring forage. The researchers suggest that opportunistic drinking in winter may help maintain osmotic balance, allowing tortoises to forage immediately when they emerge from hibernation in February or March.

This research has important conservation implications. Sonoran Desert Tortoises can be more active in the winter than previously recognized. The authors advise that it would be prudent to take measures to minimize potential impacts on tortoises during development projects in the winter season.



Sonoran Desert Tortoise at pool. Photo by Keith Sullivan.

MAS President Attends National Audubon Annual Convention

By Mark W. Larson

Over the weekend of July 12-15, I attended the annual convention of the National Audubon Society, held this year in the Columbia River Gorge upriver from Portland, Oregon. I got to see some old friends and made some new ones, too. I participated in informative sessions on a wide variety of topics. On a field trip into Gifford Pinchot National Forest I saw a lifebird: a Chestnut-backed Chickadee. Best of all, people were interested in hearing about what we do in Arizona and, specifically, in the Maricopa Audubon Society.

The setting for this convention could not have been more delightful. The Columbia River was the final leg of the Lewis and Clark Expedition's voyage from St. Louis, Missouri to the Pacific Ocean. The convention site was a lodge on the Washington



Mt. Hood, Oregon. Photo by Mark Larson.

State side of the river, set among tall Douglas firs and aspens. The snow-capped volcanoes of Mt. St. Helens, Mt. Adams, and Mt. Hood were visible nearby.

One of the most exciting things I learned at the convention was that each Chapter of the National Audubon Society now can have a free license to GIS mapping software provided through a special agreement with what is perhaps the premier geographic information systems mapping company in the world, ESRI,

Inc. What this means is that Maricopa Audubon will now have access to ArcGIS, an extremely useful mapping tool for our conservation projects, trip planning, and other applications. If you have an interest in learning how we can use this new capability, please contact me. 🐾

In Memoriam

Maricopa Audubon Society sadly announces the passing of two familiar and beloved chapter members.

Karen Kaiser

Longtime Maricopa Audubon Society member Karen Kaiser passed away suddenly on July 28, 2013. Karen, along with her husband Richard, volunteered at the MAS book store, diligently ordering, schlepping, and selling boxes of books at meetings for about five years. Karen served on the MAS board briefly as secretary. Her love of birds was too big for one chapter, and friends she made at all three local chapters came together to honor her life at her memorial service. Besides coming to most monthly MAS meetings, she went on numerous field trips with the chapter, and did a lot of traveling around the United States. Karen and Richard owned many dogs and cats over the years, and also volunteered at The Arizona Humane Society, as well as the Phoenix Zoo. She will be missed by the Audubon family, and her love of nature, animals and people will be long remembered.

Doug Green 1935-2013



Have you ever seen a cylindrical book? This phenomenon occurs when every page is crammed with clippings, notes and specimens (secured with 3M tape, of course). The book bulges to the point that it needs to be secured with rubber bands that draw the pages back together into a perfect cylinder. Such was the shape of many reference books in the library of Doug Green and a testament to his insatiable curiosity and quest for knowledge. His love of nature was manifest in his desire to share that love, to educate, and in turn protect and conserve plants and animals. Doug was generous with his time, expertise, and resources, volunteering to man educational tables at countless events. Sadly, Doug passed away on September 11. Doug was passionate about botany and was past president of the Arizona Native

Plant Society and active in the Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society. He served as education chair for Maricopa Audubon Society 2004-07 and was a perennial raffle winner at MAS meetings since he bought ribbons of tickets. Doug was known to be distracted by plants during the Carefree Christmas Bird Counts. He was friendly, outgoing, inquisitive, and an expert, self-educated botanist. He had an avuncular charm that will be greatly missed. His family suggests donations in his name to Arizona Native Plant Society – Phoenix Chapter, Box 41206, Sun Station, Tucson, AZ 85717 or Shriners Hospitals for Children. Condolences may be sent to Joann Green, 6243 E. Sunnyside Dr., Scottsdale, AZ 85254-4968.

A Closer Look at the Abert's Towhee

By Tom Gatz

(Modified and reprinted from *The Gatherings*, the newsletter of the volunteers at the Desert Botanical Garden)

Only the Grinch, with a heart two sizes too small, could hear a brilliant red cardinal singing in the backyard without having his spirits lifted. And our cheeky Cactus Wrens practically demand our attention with their vocalizations that sound more like an old car's grinding ignition than a bird song. Most non-birders, however, rarely pay much attention to one of our other common backyard birds in the Phoenix area, the innocuous Abert's Towhee (pronounced "toe-hee"), discreetly scratching around under the bushes for insects and seeds in its somber brown plumage. About 10 inches in length, including its long tail, this large, secretive member of the ground-sparrow family's only obvious field mark is the contrast between its short, stout, pale beak and its "dipped in ink" black face. It was named for Lt. James W. Abert, U.S. Army, who collected the first specimen in the late 1800s.

Although not gifted with beautiful plumage, the Abert's Towhee makes up for it with strong family values; they almost always mate for life and never leave home. Non-migratory, the Abert's Towhee can live out most of its life (up to 8 ½ years) in an area of good habitat not much larger than two football fields. Seldom flying very far or high, flight accounts for less than five percent of its daylight activity.

When visually separated from one another, like teenagers in the mall on cell phones, the male and female towhees stay in constant contact with their locative call, a high-pitched, penetrating *seep*. When reunited face to face, they

make a harsh chattering sound resembling *sleep, sleep, cha, cha, cha* known as a "squeal duet." When you hear it, you would think it is one bird vocalizing. In fact, it is both birds calling simultaneously.

Strongly tied to the tree-lined areas along our desert creeks and streams, this riparian bird has also colonized Phoenix (but not Tucson) urban areas in response to the food and cover provided in our irrigated backyards and gardens. So why are Abert's towhees so common in the Phoenix urban area but not in the Tucson urban area? Researchers Madhusudan Katti and Eyal Shochat hypothesize that it may be due to the lack of riparian corridors in the Tucson metro area from which towhees can disperse around town. The greater Phoenix area includes the Salt, Gila, Verde, and Agua Fria riverbeds. In support of their theory, Katti and Shochat found a decrease in towhee abundance the farther they surveyed from riverbeds.

Though still common around the greater Phoenix area, the Abert's Towhee was recently put on the National Audubon Society's Watch List of birds believed to be rare or declining due to loss of riparian habitat in other parts of its limited range. Restricted mainly to the lower elevations of Arizona, with very small extensions into adjacent states, the Abert's Towhee has one of the smallest total distributions of any U.S. bird species.

The next time you hear something scratching under a bush in your garden, take a closer look. You may see an Abert's Towhee (with its mate always close by). 🐦

Tom Gatz has been a MAS member since 1981.



Listen for mated pairs of Abert's Towhees performing simultaneous, vocal duets in your backyard or favorite riparian birding spot. Photos by Jeff Stemshorn.

References:

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- Tweit, R. C. and D. M. Finch. 1994. Abert's Towhee (*Melospiza aberti*), *The Birds of North America Online* (A. Poole, Ed.). Ithaca: Cornell Lab of Ornithology; Retrieved from *the Birds of North America Online*: <http://bna.birds.cornell.edu/bna/species/111>

The Big Sit!

By Herb Fibel



Vermilion Flycatcher. Photo by Pete Moulton.

"What if," mused John Himmelman of the New Haven (Connecticut) Bird Club, "I got a small group of birding friends together, and we just sat around in the woods on an early autumn day, enjoying the fellowship while tallying all the bird species that came to visit and made their presence known to us?" Thus was born in 1993 the annual international event known as the "Big Sit!", and, yes Virginia, the exclamation point in the event's title is an integral part of the event's name.

The concept grew so quickly that, before long, rules had to be established. The second Sunday in October was chosen as the annual date for the event. Why? Because in Connecticut, at least, that time is perfect for sitting out in the woods and enjoying the onset of autumn. Then thought went into the size of the circle in which the participants would sit. John picked a 17 foot diameter. "Why", you ask again. Two reasons: The first was that it would cause future generations of sitters to wonder why 17 feet, and second, because a circle of this size was perfect for accommodating a small group of friends, their

chairs, a picnic table and a small barbecue grill.

Fast forward to 2013. This year there will be some 1,400 Big Sit! circles in about seven different countries. For 'first day adventists' the event can now be held either on the Sunday or the Saturday of the second weekend in October. The event has been adopted by *Bird Watcher's Digest* (BWD) and is co-sponsored by Swarovski. Anyone can do a circle, but if you want your results to become part of the BWD tally, you must pre-register with BWD.

I read an article in a birding magazine in 1995 about the Big Sit! and decided to try it at Granite Reef Recreation Area of the Tonto National Forest in October 1996. I chose the site, because it was a spot where I'd seen the biggest variety of bird species over the years. MAS members Pete Moulton, Terri Brodner, and Ken and Ardelle Howe signed on to help. Pete will join me for this, our 18th year of doing the Big Sit! Ken has passed away, and I don't think Ardelle drives anymore. Terri does her own Big Sit! now, at Tres Rios. Our Big Sit! has come to be known as the Kathryn F. Anderson Maricopa Audubon Society Granite Reef Asterisks Big Sit! Participants this year are expected to be the aforementioned Pete, Adam and Phyllis Martin, Tom and Rosalinda Partel, Kathe Anderson, and Cynthia Donald.

In the seventeen years thus far we've tallied 141 different bird species. Seventy-one species for the day was our biggest total, and 42 species in October 2012 was our lowest tally to date. In recent years this has become a fundraising event for MAS as well, and this year proceeds are designated for sugar and bird food for the Paton House in Patagonia. The event will be over by the time you read this, but if you would like to make a donation, make your check payable to Maricopa Audubon Society, indicate that it is a Big Sit! donation, and send it to me at my address indicated on the back page of The Cactus Wren•dition. But the main object of this event is, and always will be: sitting out in nature with friends, and enjoying not only the wildlife, but the camaraderie. And, who knows, maybe next year you'll want to register your own Big Sit! circle at one of your favorite birding spots, which could even be your backyard. 🌵

The Finch at the Lip of the Volcano

By David Chorlton

*Friday's bus pulls up
and its passengers file out to walk
the uphill path
between leaves that expand as we pass
to the lookout point
where a sulphur scent
obscures the view*

*into the crater. Only when wind
pulls the clouds apart
do the slopes appear below
in shivering greys
that take on shapes and lose them
over and again
while they slide toward the fire
at the centre of the Earth.
A Yellow-thighed finch hops by*

*those of us whose eyes
are trained on the immensity
before us, stops, looks around in the
manner
of a bird accustomed to crumbs,
and slips into the vegetation
before appearing again*

*as the first drops fall
of rain drawn to lava. The yellow
on the finch's thighs survives
when every other colour has been taken
by the silver-lined darkness
that surrounds us.*

the big sit



Claudia and a Couple of Cooper's Tales

By Vicki Hire

Met Claudia. Nine to five, Claudia is a medical transcriptionist – but give her a free hour, day or a weekend and you will find her volunteering at Liberty Wildlife in Scottsdale.

Claudia began volunteering at Liberty in 2004 after participating in the Gila River CBC (Christmas Bird Count), during which a fellow birder suggested she get involved.

Like most new volunteers, Claudia started out as a 1st tier volunteer helping with the daily care and feeding of animals, as well as cleaning the facility. Since then, she's moved through the ranks, and is fully trained in rescue transport, medical services, education services, and as an eagle handler!

Claudia says it's impossible to come up with a favorite story from over the years. However, the rescue of a migrating female Zone-tailed Hawk in Litchfield Park would be one at the top of her list. It had been shot in its wing. The chipped bone eventually calcified over, enabling the hawk to once again fly. Claudia was exuberant about the eventual release of the Zone-tailed Hawk that took place during the next migration period, made possible by the care provided by Liberty Wildlife.

Claudia also shared a Couple of Cooper's Tales.

Meet Monk, a male Cooper's Hawk rescued as a fledgling in late summer of 2012, near Florence, Arizona. Monk had fallen from his nest and was cared for about one month prior to coming to Liberty Wildlife. Because of his injured left wing bone, he was unable to fly. Monk is



Claudia & Monk. Photo by Matt VanWallene.

Although both Monk and Tukee were around the same age when they were rescued, they are at different stages of training at Liberty Wildlife. "Tukee is a bit more on the 'wild' side," says Claudia. And although Monk is not imprinted, he is habituated – accustomed to humans.

On average, Cooper's Hawks live 10-15 years. However, at Liberty Wildlife, a Cooper's Hawk named Isis, who arrived as a juvenile, lived to be 27 years old. Both Monk and Tukee are eligible for the Sponsorship Program. A Fledgling Sponsorship of \$30 helps pay for their care for an entire year. 🦅



Monk. Photo by Matt VanWallene.

currently in the process of training as an educational bird. A monastery in the area referred Monk's rescuer to Liberty Wildlife, thus his name!

Finally, meet Tukee, another male Cooper's Hawk rescued as a fledgling in late summer of 2012. And in case you couldn't guess, Tukee was found in Ahwatukee, Arizona. He had a left wing injury that resulted in a partial amputation of his wing.



Monk. Photo by Matt VanWallene.

Visiting Liberty Wildlife

By Matt VanWallene

Being four feet from a Golden Eagle is a powerful experience whether you are a birder or not. Apache is a majestic bird that has been with Liberty Wildlife for 24 years. One of many patients, Liberty is on track to treat 4000 birds this year. During spring the center gets over 100 birds per day.

Wildlife rehabilitation is the core mission of Liberty, which is located in a residential neighborhood in Scottsdale. It specializes in raptors, which is very evident when you tour the facility. The goal is to release every animal that comes into its care; it has a release rate of over 50 percent. Even if not released, the outcome may be favorable. One female owl has raised 600 orphans. Some birds, like Apache, are educational ambassadors; some others are placed in zoos. Eighty percent of the injuries are due to human impact.

There are over 300 volunteers with a wide variety of duties. The main ways the public comes into contact with Liberty are the hotline and the intake window. During the height of spring, ten people or more may be lined up to drop off birds or small mammals. Birds don't get holidays and the very kind folks at Liberty don't either. Rescue, daily feedings, veterinary services, and transportation are constantly in demand. Besides all the volunteers, Liberty receives support from area veterinarians, pest control companies, local airlines, and other corporations during fundraising. The most impactful efforts involve the environmental education program. Over 800 visits to schools and special events help keep the focus on public awareness. 🦅

MAS Member Vicki Hire is an accountant and a former middle school science teacher. Almost a native, she's been an Arizona resident since 1978.

MAS Member Matt VanWallene is a native of Holland and a CPA who has been birding since 2008. He is an Eagle Scout, a former Scoutmaster, and very happy to be an Arizona resident.



Swainson's Hawk being given medication pending release during the fall migration after some further rehabilitation. Photo by Matt VanWallene.



Golden Eagle named Apache was hit by a truck in Rye in 1989 and is an educational ambassador. Photo by Matt VanWallene.



Bald Eagle named Lady Liberty was shot when a fledgling in 1991 and is an educational ambassador. Photo by Matt VanWallene.



Liberty Wildlife

Hot Line: 480-998-5550
www.libertywildlife.org

Water Wings

By Kevin E. McCluney, PhD

Many species of birds and other animals can be found in high abundance in riparian zones in Arizona, likely due to the extra vegetation, food, and water in these floodplains. But what resources are most important to each species and how might environmental change affect these species? With support from the National Science Foundation and Maricopa Audubon Society, I am working with ASU researchers Pierre Deviche and Scott Davies to answer these questions. We are using stable isotopes [see sidebar] to better identify water and food sources for riparian arthropods, lizards, and birds along the San Pedro River. Groundwater pumping, damming, and climate change are dewatering many rivers of the Southwest. Information gained from this research may help predict how increased river drying influences riparian animal communities. The new technique developed for this research measures the concentration of stable isotopes found in small blood samples (birds) or tissues (lizards, arthropods), providing a fingerprint of past water use

and the relative consumption of vegetation, herbivores, and carnivores [see sidebar].

The sampled birds are then quickly released on site, with minimal stress.

Initial research has focused on refining the technique and sampling occurred at the beginning of the monsoon season rather than the dry season, so results should be interpreted with caution. However, initial data suggest that songbird species do differ in their reliance on surface water. For example, Song Sparrows seem to get much of their water directly from the river, whereas Common Yellowthroats and Yellow-breasted

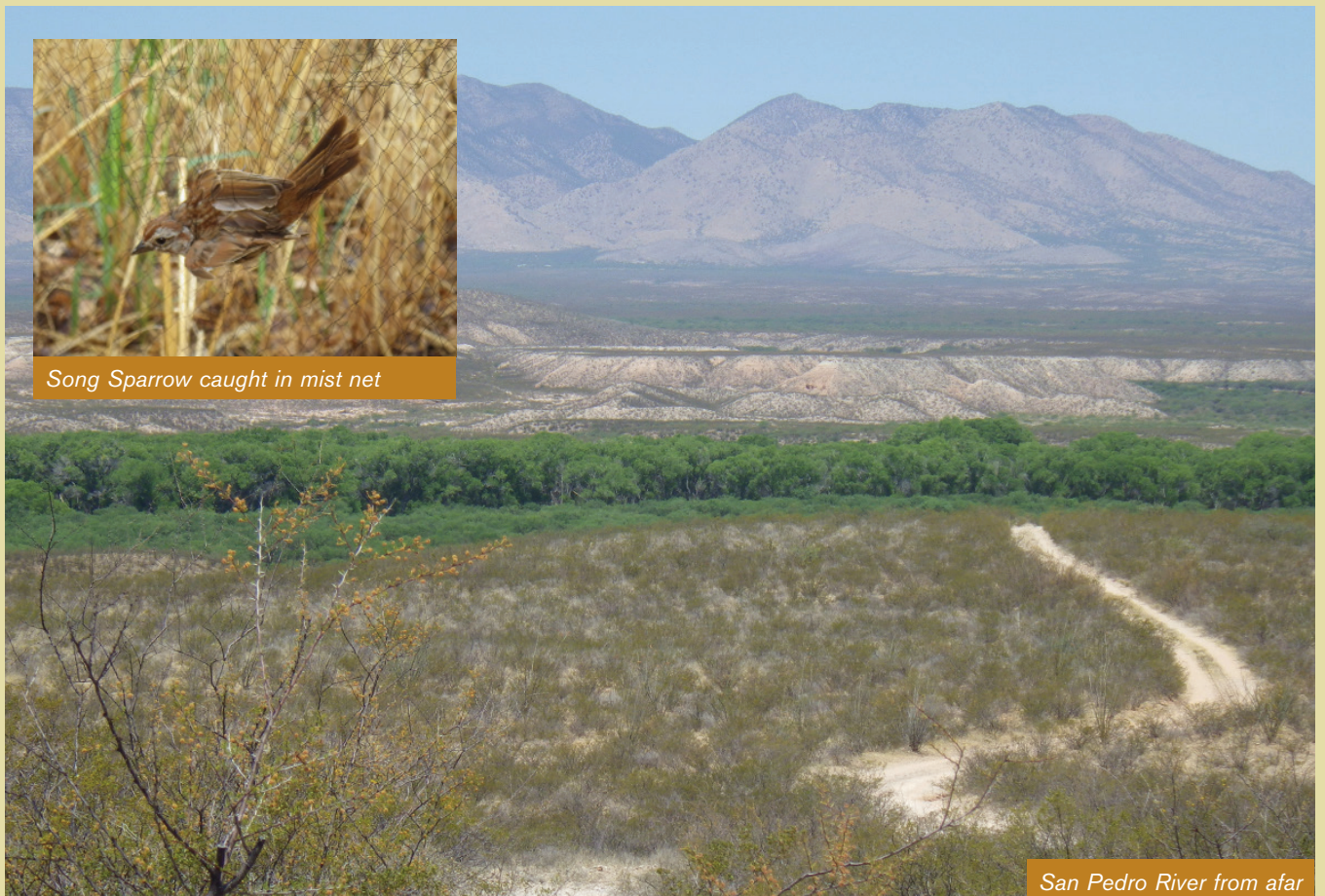
Chats are less dependent on river water. Furthermore, the technique highlights differences in diet. Many of the studied species, including the three already mentioned, appear to be eating lots of animal material, foraging high on the food chain, while Blue Grosbeaks appear to be eating mostly (but not completely) vegetation. Unexpectedly, some Black Phoebes, Summer Tanagers, and Yellow Warblers also seem to be eating lots of



Yellow-breasted Chat after collecting the sample All photos by Kevin McCluney



Song Sparrow caught in mist net



San Pedro River from afar



The blood sample in an insulin syringe (about 90 microliters)

vegetation, foraging lower on the food chain than expected. Future research will focus on water use and diet in the dry season and examine changes in hormone physiology, diet, and abundance associated with river drying. Over the long-term, this research could lend insight into the consequences of river drying for riparian bird communities and other animals living in riparian zones in the southwest. 🐦

Kevin E. McCluney is a Post-doctoral Research Scholar in the Department of

Entomology at North Carolina State University who received his PhD from ASU. In January 2014 he will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Bowling Green State University. Pierre Deviche is a Professor and Scott Davies is a doctoral student in the School of Life Sciences at ASU.



Blue Grosbeak



Dr. Pierre Deviche showing the yellow legs of the Yellow Warbler

Learn About Isotopes and Trophic Position

Isotopes

Isotopes are different forms of the same element. For instance, typical hydrogen has one proton and one electron and no neutrons. It has an atomic weight of one and can be referred to as protium. But another form of hydrogen exists that additionally has one neutron. It has an atomic weight of two and can be referred to as deuterium. Both protium and deuterium are stable, non-radioactive isotopes than can be found in nature (water molecules, carbohydrates, etc). There are similar isotopes for other elements, including oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen. Our research examines ratios of heavy to light stable isotopes of hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, and nitrogen found in nature to tell us something about where an animal gets its food and water.

Trophic Position

The amount of vegetation, herbivores, and carnivores an animal consumes determines its trophic position. Trophic simply means "to eat." So trophic position refers to how the animal eats, or more specifically the animal's position on the food chain. A food chain of 4 units length would be plants eaten by herbivores (position 1), eaten by carnivores (position 2), eaten by other carnivores (position 3). Omnivores can be at intermediate levels (e.g. 1.3, 2.6). We use nitrogen isotopes to determine trophic position, because animals excrete light nitrogen isotopes faster than heavy, leaving heavy isotopes behind. So the higher an animal is on the food chain, the heavier their nitrogen.

For a related podcast about this work, see

<http://www.chemheritage.org/discover/media/distillations/174-water-webs.aspx>

Oak Flat Update

By Bob Witzeman

“Wilderness can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures, a part of the geography of hope.”

Wallace Stegner (1909 ~ 1993)



Oak Flat mine protest, U.S. Congressional Field Hearing, Superior, AZ. Left to right include: Sandy Bahr, Director, Grand Canyon Chapter, Sierra Club; Rose Kohl; Mark Larson, MAS President; Herb Fibel, MAS Treasurer; on far right, Don Steuter- Conservation Chair, Grand Canyon Chapter, Sierra Club.

A multitude of catchy anti-Oak Flat/Resolution Copper Company protest banners greeted participants at the August 20, 2013 U.S. House of Representatives Field Hearing in Superior, Arizona. Apaches showed up in numbers with creative banners. Both U.S. Representatives Paul Gosar and Anne Kirkpatrick came to trumpet the mine's benefits in the Superior High School Gymnasium.

Representative Kirkpatrick received both an earful and an eyeful from displeased but respectful Apaches outside the meeting facility. Her district includes a large minority of Native Americans but she apparently discounts their vote.

Kirkpatrick showed no hesitation in mixing with the hostile crowd of Apaches and non-Indian protesters present. I took the opportunity to converse briefly with her and relate that the legislation, which she was supporting, specifically circumvents outright the mining company from U.S. environmental law. It exempts the Resolution Copper Company from the Environmental Impact Statement process of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as well as U.S. cultural protection laws (relating to Native American historical and religious values).

One of Resolution Copper's mining partners, Rio Tinto, a British-based company, has a particularly egregious



San Carlos Tribal Council member Wendler Nosie, backed by Native Americans, is interviewed by TV at the U.S. Congressional Field Hearing regarding the proposed Resolution Copper mine U.S. Congressional land exchange legislation, Superior, AZ.

track record of both environmental pollution and human rights violations at its mines in Southeast Asia. Resolution's other partner, Australian-based BHP Billiton, has plans for massive homesite developments adjacent to their former mine properties along the San Pedro River. They will dry up and dewater major reaches of that riparian treasure.

Without any environmental impact statement and the oversight protections conferred by NEPA, this mine, advertised as the largest copper mine in North America, will be an environmental and cultural disaster to Arizona and the nation.

Congress passed NEPA in 1969 when environmentalists' hopes were high, but now we see Congress can set aside that law with a simple rider that, in this case, allows two foreign mining giants to be exempted from the law's provisions. 🐉



Apache elders protest land swap at Congressional Field Hearing, Superior, AZ

A Biologist Remembers: Banding Ospreys

By Lisa Fitzner



Lisa at Osprey nesting platform

Throughout the country many biologists, and Auduboners, are actively banding birds. During my tenure as a wildlife biologist I participated in numerous banding studies. Although band recoveries are infrequent, data that are collected can be extremely important in helping

to manage avian populations. To help illustrate the value of bird banding, I thought I would recount one banding effort that hopefully contributed to a depressed population.

While working along the Columbia River in Eastern Washington I was able to erect several nesting platforms for Ospreys. At that time, the Osprey population had been hit hard by the use of DDT and other bioaccumulating pesticides - each nest mattered. One of the platforms was located on a wing wall of a large hydroelectric dam. We were thrilled when Ospreys began nesting on the platform less than a month after we finished erecting it. When the Ospreys were old enough to band, but not old enough to cause premature fledging, I climbed into a bucket truck and was hoisted up to the nest site. Despite the precarious position, I was able to band two nestlings successfully.

Although the ultimate objective of this banding project was to look at migratory pathways, this effort had another result. A couple of weeks after I banded the young birds, a fisherman downstream of the dam managed to rescue a young Osprey that was drowning in the river. He brought the bird to the local U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service office where the biologists were happy to see that the juvenile bird had been banded. After contacting the government's banding laboratory in Patuxent, Maryland (the central warehouse for banding data), they were able to track down the bander (me) and determine from which nest the juvenile had come.

The next day, I was able to get the U.S. Corp of Engineers to hoist me, and the young Osprey, back up into the nest platform. Luckily the parents seemed unconcerned by having their offspring returned to the nest and quickly began feeding it. A week after being returned to the nest, the young bird took flight again. Although a single bird is unlikely to affect the overall population, when rebuilding severely depressed stocks, every successfully fledged young counts. 🐾



Lisa preparing to return young Osprey to the platform nest

banding ospreys

Book Review: The Handbook of Bird Photography

By Nathaniel Smalley.

The *Handbook of Bird Photography* is a beautiful book, with a glossy cover and the kind of smooth, heavyweight pages I always look for when I am buying a book as a Christmas gift. Add to this countless, stunning images of birds and you've got a work of art.

The book aims to give you all the information you need to get started as a bird photographer and provides an abundance of tips and tricks applicable to all nature photography. As you might guess, the equipment of a bird photographer isn't the same as that of a studio portrait photographer, and *The Handbook of Bird Photography* covers this in great detail, dedicating five chapters to the subject of equipment. While the authors try to console those owning a point and shoot camera with a few encouraging sentences, the truth is *The Handbook* assumes you have made an investment in your photography equipment, or will do so soon. Another four chapters clarify how to use that equipment. These pages are graced with beautiful bird shots accompanied by explanations of the technique and settings

used for each shot. A chapter entitled 'Use Weather to Your Advantage' covers tips and tricks for producing beautiful images even in rain and snow.

Beyond the hardware and know-how needed to get the shot, you of course need the birds themselves! How to find the birds, lure, and sneak up on them is what the rest of the book is about. These chapters include everything from using a bird blind and limiting your impact on the natural environment to bird behavior and exotic shooting locales.

Photographer or not, any bird watcher will enjoy these chapters; you're likely to learn a trick or two you can use to find our feathered friends.

As a lifelong birder and nature photographer, I recommend this book for both the bird photographer and traditional birder alike. 🐾

Markus Varesvuo, Jari Peltomäki & Bence Máté. 2013. *The Handbook of Bird Photography*. Rocky Nook. 368 pages. \$32.29 paper.

Arizona Christmas Bird Count Schedule 2013-2014

By Walter Thurber

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas Bird Counts since the year 1900. Volunteers from throughout the Western Hemisphere go afield 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 skills and endurance. Many counts hold a compilation dinner at the end of the day where results are tabulated and stories shared. There is no longer a participation fee. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one or more of interest to you and contact the compiler for information.

Date	Day	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	Email
12/14	Sa	Avra Valley	Mary Lou Cole	520-578-0114	birdingnana@msn.com
12/14	Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-247-3098	henrydetwiler@earthlink.net
12/14	Sa	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022	morrall.em@gmail.com
12/14	Sa	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778	seetrogon@comcast.net
12/14	Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629	batesd@cox.net
12/14	Sa	Timber Mesa	Mary Ellen Bittorf	928-367-2462	mcbitt30@cableone.net
12/15	Su	Grand Canyon	Brian Gatlin	928-638-7968	brian_gatlin@nps.gov
12/15	Su	Jerome	Julie Wills	928-300-9775	jwills282@hotmail.com
12/15	Su	Saint David	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/15	Su	Tucson Valley	Rich Hoyer	520-325-5310	birdernaturalist@me.com
12/16	Mo	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-925-5567	duerksen@msn.com
12/16	Mo	Pipe Spring NM	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105	andrea_bornemeier@nps.gov
12/16	Mo	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-837-2446	kurtrad@mexicobirding.com
12/18	We	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	ctomoff@prescott.edu
12/19	Th	Patagonia	Abbie Zeltzer	520-604-6320	amindajar@gmail.com
12/20	Fr	Elfrida	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/20	Fr	Phoenix-Tres Rios	David Powell	602-441-5508	vireo@vireos.com
12/21	Sa	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221	tedmouras@mindspring.com
12/22	Su	Atascosa Highlands	Jake Mohlmann	610-390-2424	mohlmann2@yahoo.com
12/22	Su	Camp Verde	Bea Cooley	928-526-5069	bea.cooley@gmail.com
12/22	Su	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012	hassayampacbc@yahoo.com
12/26	Th	Superior	Cynthia Donald	480-283-4515	planres@earthlink.net
12/28	Sa	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Terry Blows	928-774-8028	terence.blows@nau.edu
12/28	Sa	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Clark Blake	520-625-1015	mclake@nas.com
12/28	Sa	Portal	Jackie Lewis	520-558-2287	winjac12@vtc.net
12/29	Su	Bill Williams Delta	Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144	kathleen_blair@fws.gov
12/30	Mo	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187	aplomado@cox.net
12/30	Mo	Havas NWR	DeeDee DeLorenzo	928-758-2707	poncho@citlink.net
01/02	Th	Carefree	Walter Thurber	480-483-6450	wathurber@cox.net
01/04	Sa	Appleton-Whittell	Robert Weissler	520-234-1792	weissler@aves.org
01/04	Sa	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	d_jenness@hotmail.com
01/04	Sa	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267	john_spence@nps.gov
01/04	Sa	Payson	Dave Hallock	928-474-9475	eldoradh@rmi.net
01/04	Sa	Sedona	Rich Armstrong	928-282-3675	richarmstrong@q.com
01/05	Su	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251, x101	bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov
Unknown	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Kim Veverka	520-387-4987		kim_everka@fws.gov

Nearby New Mexico Count

12/29	Su	Peloncillo Mountains	Nicholas Pederson	505-417-8665	ndpederson83@gmail.com
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Also see www.az.audubon.org or www.azfo.org

Dippers Arrives and I Work with Endangered Birds

By Mary Rose



Dippers in which Mary Rose will cross the Pacific

Dippers has arrived – the boat I will be rowing across the Pacific and to which I will entrust my life for three months next year. It's great to see her finally here but at the same time it brings home the reality of this project. Less than nine months to go until the start of the Great Pacific Race and there is so much still to do.

Appropriately named after a bird family, Dippers crossed the Indian Ocean previously when Sarah Outen rowed her from Australia to Mauritius. She is in great shape and with

Dippers will be dividing her time between Arizona and California as she is fitted out and upgraded as necessary. A lot of the upgrades such as larger waterproof hatches need to be done in California, and testing must be done on rougher water anyway. While Tempe Town Lake and Lake Pleasant are great for rowing, I need to be prepared for waves up to 40 feet! So California it is. I think my car will be able to find its way to the Los Angeles and San Diego areas itself very quickly.

In early September I made my first trip to Hawaii – this time on the fast plane as opposed to the slow boat. It was exciting to fly over the ocean I will be rowing, and I found myself looking out the window on the approach to Honolulu, locating the marinas, and “planning” my approach for 2014.

I went to Hawaii to visit the Keahou Bird Conservation Center located in the small town of Volcano on the Big Island. The center is operated by the San Diego Zoo and is the location of their Hawaii Bird Conservation Program. At this facility they work with Alala (Hawaiian Crow), and several species of rainforest bird – Elepaio, Maui Parrotbill, Palila, and Puaiohi. Hawaiian birds are some of the most endangered birds in the world; they are in our own backyard, but many people do not know of their plight. What an honor to be given the opportunity to work with these birds and get to know some of the issues, so that maybe through my row I could help raise awareness. The staff welcomed me and I was treated as any intern biologist would be and assigned the same tasks. I was in heaven.

One of the species I worked with at the Keahou Bird Conservation Center really stood out – the Alala. It's not every day that you are able to work with a bird that is extinct in the wild and only has a world population of 115. One of



Hello Pacific Ocean

a few minor modifications and additions to meet the Great Pacific Race rules she will be ready for me to row the Pacific in June 2014. Sarah wrote a book about her Indian Ocean crossing in this very boat, so I have a useful reference for things that I may want to change. Things like the positioning of certain equipment in the event of a breakdown can be addressed, so in the event I need to fix something it will at least be in a position which is easier to access. Having a book about Sarah's row is invaluable!

Dippers Arrives and I Work with Endangered Birds (cont.)

those 115 birds is at the San Diego Zoo and the remainder is split between the San Diego Zoo's facilities on the Hawaiian Big Island and Maui. It is a tragedy that every living Alala is in captivity in order to save the species. Yet it was a special experience to prep diets, devise enrichment, and clean aviaries for these birds. I was also able to learn about the birds' genetic spread, the family trees, and some major issues faced by biologists in trying to save the Alala. Biologists began with just 12 birds. Although they have expanded the population to 115, there is still a long way to go.

While on the Big Island, I also had the opportunity to visit the Hawaiian Wildlife Center, which has been in operation for about 12 months; their focus is on the rescue and rehab of seabirds. The birds they most often deal with tend to be endangered species. I saw Red-footed Boobies and storm-petrels receiving treatment and rehab for various injuries.

While the main purpose of this trip was to work with endangered birds, I also could not pass up the opportunity to try out the Hawaiian waters. Unfortunately there were no ocean boats in the area (it will be a very different story in September 2014), so I went in an outrigger for a few hours to get the feel of the water. I am much better at rowing an ocean or sculling boat than an outrigger but I got my first view of what it may be like to be on the open ocean. My "Hello Pacific Ocean" moment. I was still in sight of land, but I could look out in the other direction and see nothing but ocean and feel the movement of the waves beneath me. I did not feel anxious or scared, but it was a strange feeling to know that the sight I was seeing would be all I would see for three months next year.



Hawaiian Crow or Alala. Photo by Romano Scatturo.

Things have been moving along very nicely back at home as well and my new race-specific website is up and running, and fundraising to benefit bird conservation has begun. I plan to raise \$1 million. I have about 3000 miles to row and to get to \$1 million, I need to raise just \$333 per mile. The MaryRows.com website has launched and I am offering miles for adoption. Adopt a mile in your name: dedicate it to someone special, your organization, or even an endangered species. Only 3000 of these miles exist. Each mile will be linked to the tracking beacon on my boat, so when I reach your mile, your message or dedication will appear on MaryRows.com. One hundred percent of the funds raised from the adopted miles will go to bird conservation projects. 🐦

Nature Through the Artist's Eye: Linda M. Feltner

As a nature artist and interpreter of the natural world, I am a visual storyteller. Animals, plants and landscapes share intertwining lives, providing endless inspiration. With close observation, attention to accuracy, and detail, their remarkable stories can be portrayed.

My aim is to provide a spark—to awaken curiosity and invite questions. I have traveled to forest, tundra, jungle, and desert that intrigued my senses, proposed mysteries and revealed the relationships in nature. Over time, interpreting these stories has become my way to illustrate the value of these places.

As an artist and educator, I create artwork for visitor centers and trails; teach national workshops in Bird Anatomy and Live Animal Drawing; and instruct technique classes for the



"Desert Fan – Crested Saguaro" Transparent watercolor, 14"x25"

Imagine a world without coffee and chocolate! Pollinators of the world, including bees, bats, birds, and butterflies are essential to the survival of plants we and other organisms use for food and shelter. Pollinators are declining at an alarming rate worldwide and we need to focus on all of them, even the smallest animals that are so easy to overlook. Saguaro forests survive with the help of many, often unremarkable species. Busy both day and night, these species provide a valuable service throughout the Sonoran Desert.

Arizona Sonora Desert Museum Art Institute. I'm a member of the Society of Animal Artists, Artists for Conservation, and the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators.

By inspiring others to look and to see, I hope to promote an appreciation for the delicate complexity of nature and to foster a desire to protect it. Unaltered landscapes still hold undiscovered stories and by conserving these places we will have tales to tell for years to come. 🐦



"Darwin's Shorebirds"
Walnut ink, 12"x11"

Not all of us are able to study Darwin's Finches in their native Galapagos Islands, but we can observe evolutionary adaptations among local birds. Shorebirds developed extraordinary diversity in their bills, enabling them to take advantage of separate ecological niches. During migration hundreds of thousands of shorebirds feed together at critical stopover sites to quickly refuel for their long-distance journeys. Survival of migratory shorebirds depends upon conservation of these rich habitats.



"Evening Encounter"
Transparent Watercolor, 12x16"
The ringtail, with large eyes and appealing demeanor, is among the nocturnal wonders of the Sky Islands of Arizona. These forested mountain ranges are internationally important for their outstanding biological diversity. This relative of the familiar raccoon, is an agile climber in rocky terrain and forages for fruits and small animals. This painting of the ringtail, blue-winged grasshopper, and piñon pine is from a series created to promote curiosity and appreciation of the region's biological diversity.



"Huachuca Redstarts" Transparent Watercolor, 18" x 12"
I live among the canyons of the Huachuca Mountains. In the lower reaches of Miller Canyon this pair of Painted Redstarts was seen taking grassy material into their hidden nest. A Dull Firetip and its host plant Emory Oak are both depicted. The oak habitat provides year-round shelter and food for many types of insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals. The uniqueness and diversity of the southeastern Arizona Sky Islands are well recognized by scientists and nature enthusiasts who visit the area.



"A Mischief of Jays"
Pastel, 20"x13"
In the oak woodlands of southeastern Arizona, we share a habitat with the Mexican Jays. They form a social group, largely of family members, whose non-breeding juveniles from previous years act as helpers to raise a new brood. The youngest have a pale pink bill that over several years gradually reduces color until it becomes entirely black. These vocal, curious and intelligent corvids are both lively and captivating. Gawky young intently watch the older birds and learn the ways of their intricate world.



"Manzanita Afternoon: Gambel's Quail"
Transparent watercolor, 10"x 24"
From the windows of my studio, a parade of daily life in the Huachuca Mountains catches my attention. A flock of Gambel's Quail rushes across the open grasses to gather in the shade of this old Manzanita. While they peck the ground, a Tarantula Hawk Wasp also searches among the plant duff. The quail soon leave this camouflage and scurry across the grass towards other safe cover.

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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.Wren•dition@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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