



The Cactus Wren·dition

Volume LXVI, No. 4

Winter 2012



Yellow-rumped Warbler

Photo by Mike Baird bairdphotos.com

Programs Winter 2012-13

Tuesday, December 4, 2012

Cochise County's National Wildlife Refuges and the Lower San Pedro River Collaborative Conservation Initiative

Bill Radke

Cochise County in southeast Arizona contains some of the most biologically diverse and unique fish and wildlife in the nation. San Bernardino National Wildlife Refuge and Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuge are two special areas administered by the



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that were set aside to help recover several federally-listed threatened and endangered species. At least 332 bird species have been confirmed on the refuges, including many nesting species. In addition, 67 mammal, 43 reptile, 13 amphibian, and 8 fish species have been documented. The refuges lie within the Rio Yaqui Basin, a large watershed that drains portions of Arizona, New Mexico, Sonora, and Chihuahua. Come hear and see why these refuges were established, what fish and wildlife they protect, how the areas are managed, and learn how you can visit and enjoy them. Additionally, there is currently an opportunity to help ensure protection of a Globally Important Bird Area along the Lower San Pedro River through a collaborative conservation initiative that would help maintain habitat for migratory birds and endangered species, contribute to a healthy river system and benefit local economies, and help guarantee continued open space in portions of Cochise, Pima, and Pinal Counties. Information regarding the idea for a Lower San Pedro River Conservation Area will be provided.



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"When one tugs a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world."

— John Muir

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.

Tuesday, January 1, 2013

Mad Program
Cynthia Donald

Do you know what is the 4th largest island in the world? Do you know what island has the highest degree of endemism (unique, native flora and fauna) in the world? Do you know what country is also considered by some scientists to be the eighth continent? And, can you cap this off with the knowledge that this same country is one of the world leaders in environmental degradation? Here's a photo of one of its signature vertebrate species...



No, I'm not going to tell you where it is or what this endearing creature is. If you want to see and learn more about this amazing place, please join me at the January 2013 meeting of Maricopa Audubon. Safe travels.
Dorrance Hall, Desert Botanical Garden



WILLIAM RADKE is a wildlife biologist and is currently the refuge manager of San Bernardino and

Leslie Canyon National Wildlife Refuges in Cochise County. A Phoenix native, and a graduate from the University of Arizona, Bill has worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1983, and has been stationed at several different wildlife refuges in five western states. He works with a variety of mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, invertebrates, and plants, and was awarded the 2011 Sky Island Alliance Land Stewardship Award and the 2011 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Champion Award. He lives with his wife and daughters in southeast Arizona.

Webster Auditorium, Desert Botanical Garden

Tuesday, February 5

Arizona: From Ground to Air
Paul Landau

Arizona photographer Paul Landau will present his superlative images of wildlife from Arizona deserts and mountains, from microscopic to the cosmos, using focal lengths from extreme macro to over 500mm telephoto ranges. An avid naturalist born in Virginia, he has spent his entire life studying and documenting nature of all varieties with an emphasis on arthropods and reptiles. Landau is a fulltime working artist. He sells large custom prints from landauimaging.com, and travels on assignment for a Los Angeles agency shooting corporate events worldwide. He also teaches nature photography workshops, including one for MAS, TBA.

Webster Auditorium, Desert Botanical Garden



On the cover: Yellow-rumped Warbler
Canon 1D Mark III 600mm IS w/ 1.4X II TE, on tripod -
Photo by Mike Baird bairdphotos.com

President's Message

by Mark W. Larson



Mark W. Larson

When you read this the 2012 election will be upon us. We all need to keep in mind that, at least when voting for the office of President of the United States, we are not just voting for someone to run the country. We are voting for a person with a philosophy of government that results in laws and policies that affect all of us and those to come in future generations.

We are also, then, indirectly

voting for the large group of people—political appointees—who will implement those laws and policies in every arm and agency of the Federal Government.

Without a doubt, this election can have a positive or a negative effect on the issues we have been fighting for, all of which involve conserving and protecting treasures of the natural world so dear that we want to ensure that they continue to exist for future generations of Arizonans to enjoy.

On a more local scale, the recent bequest to Maricopa Audubon from the Hughes Trust may make it possible for us to protect one special property that has delighted nature enthusiasts from Arizona and around the world. We consider

it one of the most important sites in Arizona. Negotiations are on-going, so look for more news about this topic in the next Cactus Wren-dition.

The MAS Board of Directors is considering holding a series of "Getting Started" workshops to help our members learn more about a range of subjects such as birds, butterflies, habitats, backyard habitats for birds and wildlife, dragonflies and damselflies, and other topics. These workshops would be low-key introductions for beginners only and would not take the place of more intensive classes on these subjects. Please contact any Board member if you would be interested in attending, or if you have a suggestion for some additional topic.

Should one of your friends or family wish to join the Maricopa Audubon Society, remember that there are two ways: join the National Audubon Society and be assigned to the Chapter that includes your zip code (east of 43rd Avenue in Phoenix, all of Scottsdale and Tempe) or you can join Maricopa Audubon as a "Friend." Please see the details of membership on the back page of this Wren-dition.

As always, we welcome anyone who is interested in the natural world to come to our monthly meetings at the Desert Botanical Garden in Phoenix. That includes members who have never been to a meeting! If you want to come but lack transportation, please let me know and I will help you get to a meeting. You will enjoy the experience! 🐦

Letter From the Editor

by Emily Morris

Just a small note from me this edition as there's so much great stuff for us to pack in! I want to make sure that everyone is taking advantage of the best time to live in Arizona! The weather is perfect, the birds are arriving for the winter, and there's a lot to do around the Valley. I hope you all have a wonderful next couple of months! 🐦

P.S. Nora Graf's gourds (page 11) make excellent gifts. For other great nature-inspired art, make sure to check out the Audubon Arizona's Gifts From Nature event on Dec. 1-2, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. For more information, go to az.audubon.org/events/gifts-nature.

MAS Sponsors Nature Study Classes at the Desert Botanical Garden

We are pleased to announce that Maricopa Audubon will be sponsoring classes at the DBG and we encourage you to check them out! Included in these classes are classes on dragonflies, birds of all kinds (of course!), and a great new series taught by PhD candidate, Scott Davies, called "Behind Birding" with a class on November 15th on mating, nests, and eggs.

For more information, go to the Garden's website at <http://www.dbg.org/education-programs/classes-trips>. 🐦



Not Fooled

By Anne Fisher

*The lesser nighthawk of the West
never troubles with a nest
or copying the cactus wren,
who builds (and for a decoy) builds again.*

*The nighthawk hen's
content with air and ground to wait the future,
she knows what's coming won't be bound
no matter how deft the weaver or suture.*

Notes & Announcements

E-Newsletter

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

Birding Community E-Bulletin

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



Arizona Watchable Wildlife

Tourism Association (AWWTA)
Check out their website for events around the state – azwatchablewildlife.org



Environmental Fund

Green At Work—Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa

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

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 email 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.



Call to Get Involved

Do you love birds, teaching about birds, and/or protecting birds and their habitats? Then it's time you stepped up to help board members and other MAS members take a stand for birds in Arizona. Contact Mark Larson if you are interested in finding out more about what the board does and how you can get involved.



Turkeys' Roost

By David Chorlton

*Time turns quietly to shadow
along the slope beside the stream
and the Apache pine
where each evening the turkeys
return in procession
on slow and heavy steps
to climb as far as climbing takes them
before they beat
their wings and rise
against the odds into the roosting tree.*

*All night they rest
with all their earthly weight
set against the stars, while night
goes on around them
with its masked face, ringed tail,
and skin stretched thin
across the bones on its wings.*

*They let the sun go first
into the day
before calling to each other
and unfolding themselves from sleep
to clatter down
onto the fallen leaves and needles
layered over stones
where the ground waits to receive them
as the birds who, while other birds flew,
preferred to walk.*

Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

field trips

Mid-December to early January is the season for Christmas Bird Counts, so there will be many opportunities to get into the field with experienced birders. Check the list of CBCs in your area to volunteer for a count near you. Remember, you do not need to be an expert to help count birds and we always need more eyes on the birds!

Saturday, January 12

Needle Rock Recreation Area, Tonto National Forest

Upstream of Fort McDowell on the Verde River is a riparian area that frequently hosts Bald Eagles. The cottonwoods and willows along the river can produce wintering Accipiters as well as Western Bluebirds and several species of wood-warblers. We will also check a number of locations in this area for Vermilion Flycatcher, wintering sparrows, shrikes, and other winter visitors. We will carpool, so drivers will need a daily recreation pass for the Tonto National Forest. Limit 8. Please contact Mark Larson at laronwarren@gmail.com for trip details, meeting location, and times.

Wednesday, January 23

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 miles 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 gentle-sloped 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. Contact Larry Langstaff at larrylangstaff1@gmail.com for reservations. Limit 8.

Friday, January 25

Agua Fria National Monument

Starting about 6:30 a.m. from N. Phoenix, we will make brief stops to explore two exits off the I-17 before leading into the Monument for a couple of hours. This is new birding territory for me, so I'm not sure what we'll find, except gorgeous remote scenery of high chaparral and whatever birds make their winter home there. Roads off I-17 lead to a riparian area along the Agua Fria River, but one road should bring us to a hike down a canyon. No services at the Monument. We will wrap up before noon at a place we can picnic (perhaps a park in Anthem). Limit 8. Reservations required. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net.

Thursday -Saturday, Jan. 31 to Feb. 2

Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, NM

We'll start about 6:30 a.m. from Scottsdale, head to Payson for some early morning birding in that area, then go east on SR260 and US60, birding along the way in AZ. We'll arrive in Socorro, NM at the end of the day and stay there for 2 nights in a moderately-priced hotel. We will head 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. There are usually a few Ross's Geese at the refuge in winter, so we may have a chance to compare the two species. We'll start Saturday at the Bosque, and leave the area in time for 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 p.m.. 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. Reservations required. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net.

Saturday, February 16

Boyce Thompson Arboretum State Park

There have been some recent winters when this has been the home of a truly Mexican species, the Rufous-backed Robin. A wide range of other rare and unusual birds has appeared here as well, and we will walk the wonderful trails and variety of habitats to find what this winter may offer us. In addition to the desert trails, there is also a small impoundment, Ayer Lake, and a length of riparian habitat along Queen Creek. We will carpool to the site near Superior, Arizona. Tickets to this state park cost \$9. Please contact Mark Larson at laronwarren@gmail.com for trip details, meeting location, and times. Limit 6.

Wednesday, February 27

Higley Road/Ocotillo Road Recharge Ponds

I have been visiting the Higley Road/Ocotillo Road recharge ponds almost monthly for the last 2 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' trucks there, and they just waved at me as they drove off. If you would like to see this evolving new wetlands site, please contact Larry Langstaff at larrylangstaff1@gmail.com for reservations. Limit 8.

Friday, March 1

Florence Farmlands for Wintering Raptors and Sparrows

We'll start about 5:45 a.m. from Scottsdale, regroup at the McDonald's in Florence, and then head east into the farmlands behind the State prison. This seems an unlikely area, and I've birded it only for about an hour at different times of year, and I've wondered what it might harbor if I just had more time! So let's take more time, stopping along the way whenever we hear or see anything that is worth exploring more. In the past, raptors and sparrows have been reliable, along with common desert birds, cardinals, blackbirds and possible early flycatchers. Limit 8. Reservations required. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net.

Saturday, March 16

Hassayampa River Preserve

One of the finest gallery riparian forests remaining in the Sonoran Desert, this preserve often produces some of the best birding in the Southwestern U.S., especially in the late winter. Trails lead around Palm Lake and along the Hassayampa River. The lake can hold a variety of waterfowl and the riverine cottonwoods can produce a Red-shouldered Hawk! Many other rare birds, including a Green Kingfisher, have made appearances here, and we will attempt to see whatever is in the area when we visit. Please contact Mark Larson at laronwarren@gmail.com for trip details, meeting location, and times. Reservations required. Limit 6. Note: the Nature Conservancy has an admission fee of \$5 for non-members.

Saturday, March 16

Flagstaff Area Lakes

Meet at 8 a.m. at Denny's Restaurant on south Milton Rd. north of the intersection of I-40 and I-17. Bring a lunch and warm clothing. Call leader in advance. Will look for waterfowl on the lakes and may see species like Red Crossbill and Pinyon Jay. Charles Babbitt, 602.840-1772 or cjbabbitt@cox.net.

Saturday, March 30

ASU Research Park

I visit the ASU Research Park a lot, as it is near my home. Last winter there were hundreds of Ring-necked Ducks there as well as 20-30 Lesser Scaup. Grebes and other ducks show up during the winter. It has cement sidewalks to wander around on and lots of trees that make a pleasant environment in which to enjoy the waterfowl. Please contact Larry Langstaff at larrylangstaff1@gmail.com for reservations. Limit 8.

Monitoring Desert Tortoise Behavior at Cave Buttes

by Gillian Rice

Brian Sullivan sets up his radio tracking equipment and chooses the frequency for a juvenile tortoise he hopes to locate. We set off across the bursage and creosote studded flat in Cave Buttes Recreation Area. It's early October – although they might be seen year 'round, tortoises in the Sonoran Desert



are most active from July through the end of October.

Sullivan, Professor of Herpetology at Arizona State University, has been studying reptiles and amphibians here for thirty years. He began examining frogs

“A hundred years ago, the habitat would have resembled that of Hassayampa”

and toads, then snakes and lizards, and is now focusing on tortoises. “Cave Buttes makes a great laboratory,” he says. “I bring my students here for field trips.” With his wife, Elizabeth, a keen amateur naturalist, and sometimes his son, Keith, a student who interns for Arizona Game and Fish, Sullivan visits Cave Buttes almost every morning throughout the year.

“As a kid, I had a passion for snakes and lizards,” Sullivan explains. “I wrote to Bob Stebbins, the preeminent herpetologist and author of *A Field Guide to Western Reptiles and Amphibians*. He wrote back and encouraged me and later, at university, I worked on a project under his guidance.”

Cave Buttes comprises three habitats over about nine square miles: desert flats, washes, and hills. Much of the area is not

accessible to the general public. Managed by the Flood Control District of Maricopa County, Cave Buttes has water catchment basins. “These are rain-formed pools, never permanent, that provide summer breeding grounds for frogs and toads such as Couch’s spadefoot,” Sullivan tells me. “There are ‘toadlets’ now that hatched several weeks ago.”

Pausing every now and then to angle the tracking device in different directions and listen, Sullivan demonstrates how the signal – beep-beep – gets louder the closer we get to the tortoise.

“Watch out for the seed harvester ants,” warns Elizabeth, pointing out an ant nest, as we trek across the flats. “They can give a nasty sting.” Sullivan explains that there are 15-25

nests per hectare (about 2 ½ acres) compared to only one or two per hectare on Piestewa Peak. Regal horned lizards each eat hundreds of ants every day and bask on Cave Buttes main road. The lizards are not easy to find because they freeze when people approach. Their camouflage renders them almost invisible. Sullivan describes how horned lizards exhibit differential predatory behavior: “If a canid or felid predator gets too close, a lizard moves about and then squirts blood from its eyes into the mouth of the predator. According to research by Wade Sherbrooke, the predator finds this very distasteful.”

Sullivan points out kit fox burrows. We pause to admire a pencil cholla shaped like a small symmetrical tree in contrast to the more sprawling bush-like Christmas cholla. Black-throated Sparrows flit amongst the shrubs. Quail call and chatter in the distance.

We spot a common side-blotched lizard. “A ground-dwelling lizard,” explains Sullivan. “It has been replaced by the tree lizard in backyards across the Valley, in response to people’s landscaping choices. Human activity has had a positive impact on one species (the tree lizard) but a negative impact on another (the side-blotched lizard).”

Now, we find tortoise #35: a juvenile, six inches long, about 12-16 years old, basking in the open. It seems oblivious to

our intrusion. We stand back and I observe through binoculars. “An adult tortoise will remain still in the face of danger,” Sullivan clarifies, “but because hatchlings are still soft and easily consumed, they run away from predators.”

This particular tortoise has traveled here about a mile away from where Sullivan first tagged it. He gently approaches the tortoise and photographs it, notes its GPS location, its behavior, and the current temperature and conditions. In this way, he can build and plot a home range for each tortoise. His goal is to understand more about tortoise behavior in order to recommend conservation measures.

The desert tortoise species in the Sonoran Desert is *Gopherus morafkai*. Under the Endangered Species Act, this species is listed as a Candidate for being considered endangered or threatened.

Sullivan estimates there are about 50 desert tortoises at Cave Buttes on the flood control property. “This is not a high density compared to that at Sugarloaf Mountain, east of Fountain Hills,” he adds.

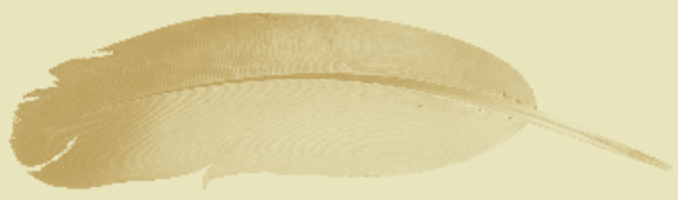
Cave Buttes is a disturbed area. “A hundred years ago, the habitat would have resembled that of Hassayampa,” says Sullivan. The riparian habitat along Cave Creek is altered because of human activity. Two dams have modified the environment. Cattle grazed here for many years. Many exotic plants thrive. People driving off-road vehicles damage the land; these vehicles are now prohibited at Cave Buttes, however. Rescue helicopter crews train here during certain months.

As we drive across Cave Buttes, a loggerhead shrike perches high watching for prey. A Harris’s antelope ground squirrel scurries over the road. Sullivan shows me the logs and debris that indicate the extent of flooding at various times.

“The Flood Control District people support our tortoise study,” explains Sullivan. “We send them updates and photos of two particular tortoises. The engineers are keen to avoid damaging tortoise habitat and hurting the tortoises.”

When looking for desert tortoises, Sullivan seeks out patches of caliche on the ground. A layer of this calcium carbonate, exposed in desert washes, is critical to allow a ceiling which the tortoises can excavate underneath. In 1993 a major flood caused caliche dens to silt up and this had an impact on tortoises that travel via washes.

Crossing the wide creek bed populated with exotic weeds, we flush Western



meadowlarks and horned larks. We reach granite rock formations and an abundance of ironwood trees. Tortoises like to forage for the fallen leaves and flowers. We hike along a wash and Elizabeth indicates caliche caves along the side – the smaller of which are suitable for tortoise refuges.

Sullivan and his wife both wield long sticks like hiking poles, but with shepherd's crook-shaped ends at the bottom. Tapping these on the ground warns snakes of our approach and the curved ends could be used to hold a snake if necessary. "We've had several close encounters with western diamond-backed rattlesnakes," says Sullivan, "It's important to be careful, especially when we have to walk through dense plant growth."

Sullivan checks tortoise refuges throughout the year. Some might contain one tortoise and others might have more than one. Caution is paramount. Elizabeth tells me: "We found one refuge containing two tortoises and one rattlesnake."

Sullivan locates Female #34 up a steep slope. I wonder how she doesn't roll down. Sullivan describes how he tracked

two females that traveled up a hill and over to the north side to forage on plants that were still thriving by September. "Females are moving much more than we anticipated," he adds. "We found eggshells in one refuge. It's hard to find eggs."

Because the tortoise can travel up and over rocky areas, this helps its survival. It lives in habitat that is less likely to be disturbed by human disturbance or development; there are relatively few dwellings built on rocky hilltops. The next tortoise we locate is Male #18, basking in the sunshine above his refuge. We watch as he ambles back over the rocks to his caliche burrow. Again, I am surprised at how easily the tortoise can maneuver over what appears to be a rather precipitous journey. However, research reveals that, in contrast to tortoises in the Mohave Desert, the Sonoran Desert dwelling *Gopherus morafkai* prefers slopes and rocky hillsides. Breeding populations occur as high as 4600 feet.

Our final stop is the earthen dam at the southern end of Cave Buttes. A Rock

Wren forages along the river rocks on the dam's top. Sullivan is keen to check on Female #26. Two days previously he and Elizabeth had surprised a coyote attacking her. The coyote ran off and Sullivan, because he is an authorized researcher, was able to relocate the tortoise closer to her nearest refuge. Desert tortoises are protected and cannot be collected, killed, transported, bought, sold, bartered, imported or exported from Arizona without authorization from the Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Sullivan follows the radio signal for Female #26 and hikes down the side of the dam, where he is pleased to find her safe along with Male #25 in a burrow under a shrub.

"Earlier in my career, I focused on evolutionary biology and systematics. Now I emphasize conservation," Sullivan explains. He hopes that his studies of tortoise behavior will contribute towards preservation of *Gopherus morafkai* during future human encroachment into wildlife habitats. 🐢

National Audubon Comes To Arizona

by Joy Haynes Hester

National Audubon recently came to Arizona for a fall board meeting, bringing a swirl of activities that brought AZ chapters together in Tucson for lively and productive discussions with each other and with national staff and board members. Invitations went out in mid-August to Arizona and New Mexico chapter leaders inviting them to attend the Chapters Forum held Friday, September 28, and the board and committee meetings the next day. Included in the invitation was Tucson Audubon's gracious offer of home stays for any who preferred to stay in the home of a Tucson Audubon member rather than in a hotel, and attendance was exceptional. I was thrilled to have 7 of the 9 AZ chapters represented at the Chapters Forum on Friday, a meeting that I had the honor of chairing, and 8 chapters were represented at a groundbreaking post-National Audubon meeting on Sunday morning of AZ chapters. Although I didn't have the pleasure of meeting him, I understand that the President of Maricopa Audubon, Mark Larson, was in attendance at the Saturday evening dinner hosted by National Audubon, and Emerson Stiles attended the Sunday meeting of AZ chapters.

The Chapters Forum is a relatively new addition to National Audubon board meetings, and I was delighted to learn of them when I came onto the national board two years ago. The purpose of the Forum is to bring area chapters together with each other and with National Audubon staff and board members to get to know each other better. A total of 42 people attended the Arizona Forum, a total that included national board members

and staff as well as the excellent chapter representation. Small group discussions after the presentations made by national, state, and chapter representatives were lively, informative, and ultimately positive when each group reported out to all.

The unifying theme of the presentations was the new Audubon strategic plan and how the work of chapters fits or might fit under it. The first speaker of the day after introductions was David Yarnold, President and CEO of Audubon, who described new initiatives related to chapters and stated that chapters are front and center in Audubon. Paul Green of Tucson Audubon followed with a program about IBAs and how chapter support of IBA's is, and can be increasingly, important support for IBAs under the new strategic plan. Sarah Porter, Arizona Audubon state director, then talked about the Western Rivers program and its potential to be a powerful unifier of chapters under the strategic plan, not just in Arizona but throughout the flyway.

The final speaker of the day was Paul Green again who briefly described the planned meeting of Arizona chapters following the NAS meetings on Sunday morning and invited all to attend. The purpose of that meeting was to continue the discussion about how chapters can work together under the new strategic plan, with the focus of that discussion to be on Bird-friendly Communities as described under the plan. I also attended that meeting and was impressed with the candid and focused discussions that took place. It ended with plans to continue discussions through telephone conference calls and future meetings. 🐢

Science Corner

Kimberly Pegram, Ph.D. Candidate at Arizona State University

Hummingbirds learn which are the best flowers, but don't use flower color

Hummingbirds use cues to learn which flowers provide the most nectar. Previous experiments have shown the hummingbirds can use both color and location of a flower to learn that the flower provides a nectar reward or the best nectar reward (i.e., has the highest concentration of sugar). In a recent experiment, Rachael Marshall and her colleagues in the UK and Canada asked whether free-living Rufous hummingbirds (*Selasphorus rufus*) used color as a cue to learn the refill rate of a flower. They designed an experiment where, for one group of hummingbirds, two different refill rates (10 min vs. 20 min) of artificial flowers were indicated by different colors, while the colors of the flowers were all different for another group of butterflies. However, there was no difference between the groups in their ability to learn the refill rate – they almost all learned by the end of 3 days. They also did this experiment with different concentrations of sugar instead of different refill rates and found the same results. The authors of the study concluded that the hummingbirds were likely using spatial or location cues to learn, but warn that the application of these results to nature is not straightforward because the natural environment is much more complex.

Marshall, R.E.S., Hurly, A., Healy, S.D. 2012. Do a flower's features help hummingbirds to learn its contents and refill rate? *Animal Behavior*. 83: 1163-1169.

Plants call for back-up

Caterpillars can be a plant's worst enemy. They eat a lot of vegetation and this can mean major damage to a plant. To try to prevent the damage, a plant can act even before the caterpillar starts feeding, when the egg is laid by a female butterfly or moth. Nina Fatouros and colleagues from the Netherlands experimented with black mustard plants, a relative of cabbage, and found that when the egg of a Large Cabbage White Butterfly was laid, 50% of the plants would kill the plant tissue around the egg, which almost always killed the egg. The plants also released chemicals that repel other egg laying butterflies from the same species and attract wasp parasites that immediately kill the eggs already laid on the plant. However, the plant did not exhibit these responses when the Cabbage Moth laid eggs. The Cabbage Moth is a generalist that lays eggs on a wide variety of plants and less often on the black mustard plants. This interaction is especially interesting because it involves more than two trophic levels, or levels of the food chain. Plants are fed on by herbivores, but the plants can call in the next level above the herbivore, insect parasites that feed on the herbivore.

Fatouros, N.E., Lucas-Barbosa, D., Weldegergis, B.T., Pashalidou, F.G., van Loon, J.J.A., Dicke, M., Harvey, J.A., Gols, R., Huigens, M.E. 2012. Plant volatiles induced by herbivore egg deposition affect insects of different trophic levels. *Plos one*. 7: 1-13.

Urban areas can be refuges for birds

We often think of urbanization as detrimental to wildlife, but many animals have adapted to these environments. Birds adapted to urban environments may be able to acquire extra resources, find suitable habitats, have longer breeding seasons and, as a new study shows, find refuge from predators. Anders Møller studied 71 species of birds living in urban and rural habitats in France. He looked at 1) the distance from an approaching human that a bird would fly away (flight distance) and 2) the encounter rates of humans. He found that raptors would leave perches when the approaching human was much farther away (a longer flight distance). The average flight distance of raptors was 54 meters (177 feet) and only 7 meters (23 feet) for smaller birds. He then estimated the percentage of time that humans were within 54 m or 7 m of birds in urban and rural environment. As you would guess, humans were in proximity to birds significantly more often in urban environments. Humans were 54 m from a bird on average 16% of the time and 7 m from a bird only 4% of the time. The author concluded from this that a small bird then had a refuge from raptor predators about 12% of the time in an urban environment as opposed to 1% for a rural environment, and that this was a benefit to urban living for small birds.

Møller, A. 2012. Urban areas as refuges from predators and flight distance of prey. *Behavioral Ecology*. 23: 1039-1035.

Odonata-watching Comes of Age

by Bob Witzeman



“Any glimpse into the life of an animal quickens our own and makes it so much the larger and better every way.”

— John Muir (1838-1914)

The spectacular photograph of the Fiery-eyed Dancer by Pierre Deviche on the cover of the last *Cactus Wren-dition* inspired me to provide some information on dragonflies and damselflies (*Odonata*). Maricopa Audubon has been leading dragonfly and damselfly identification field trips at the Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR) and Chandler Veterans Oasis Park since 2006.

That dragonfly watching has come of age with Audubon and others is evidenced by the July-August 2012 issue of *Audubon Magazine*. It contained information on the life histories of U.S. dragonflies and included some extraordinary, striking color photographs of the tails (abdominal segments) of many of our popular U.S. *Odonata*.

Dragonflies lay their eggs directly into ponds or wetlands, and their larvae/nymphs often become very aggressive underwater predators. They emerge from these aquatic larval homes in the same or following year by ascending the stalks of adjacent wetlands plant life. Damselflies lay their eggs on marsh or riparian vegetation.



Dragonflies may live a few weeks or months after emerging, though little is known since banding devices and batteries are not small enough for easy telemetry. A few short-lived, very small batteries have been attached successfully to the thorax of some Common Green Darners providing information that dragonflies can migrate considerable distances.

Those of you who keep bird lists may also find it a great time to create an *Odonata* state, county and/or life list. There are about 6500 *Odonata* in the world. Damselflies are the smaller cousins of dragonflies. They usually hold their wings next to their bodies when perched whereas, dragonflies usually hold their wings out at right angles to their body, like an airplane's wings.

About 440 *Odonata* are found in North

America (roughly half as many species as there are birds). Of that total, 311 are dragonflies and 129 are damselflies. Arizona has 72 dragonflies and 54 damselflies. Maricopa County has 38 dragons and 30 damsels.



An excellent, inexpensive field guide of dragonflies and damselflies of the southwest by Kathy Biggs is available at the book sales desk at our chapter's monthly meetings. It helps greatly if you have a close-focus pair of birdwatching binoculars (you should be able

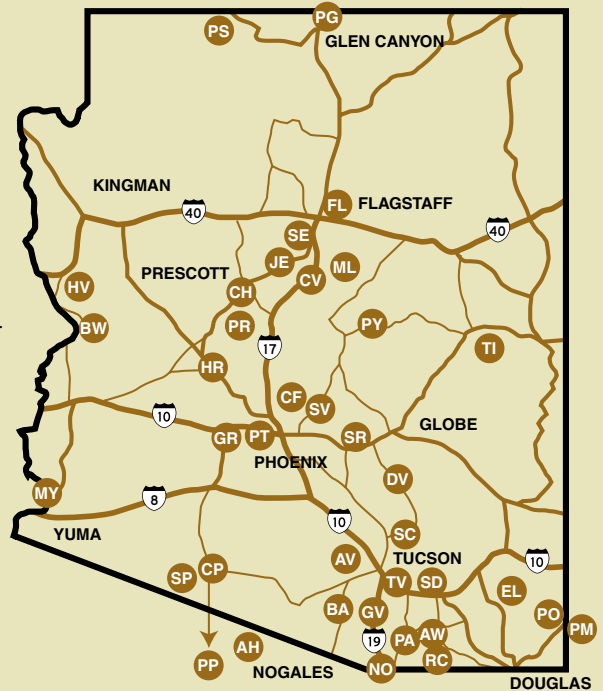
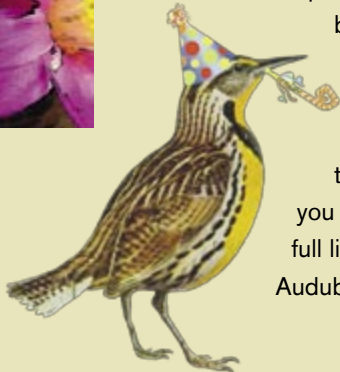
to see your shoes). This technology makes *Odonata*-watching much easier. The same binoculars are equally valuable for birding. In addition, we may have a few loaner, close-focus binoculars available on our *Odonata* field trips. Come join us next spring on one of our eye-catching *Odonata* field trips, when the next generation of dragons and damsels will emerge from their larval stage. 🦋

Arizona Christmas Bird Count Schedule 2012-2013

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. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one or more of interest to you and contact the compiler for information. For a full list of Arizona counts, please check the Maricopa Audubon website.



Date	Day	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	Email
12/14	Fr	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251	bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov
12/14	Fr	Pipe Spring NM	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105	andrea_bornemeier@nps.gov
12/14	Fr	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-837-2446	kurtrad@mexicobirding.com
12/15	Sa	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Kim Veverka	520-387-4987	kim_veverka@fws.gov
12/15	Sa	Avra Valley	Mary Lou Cole	520-578-0114	birdingnana@msn.com
12/15	Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-247-3098	henrydetwiler@earthlink.net
12/15	Sa	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022	morrall.em@gmail.com
12/15	Sa	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778	seetrogon@comcast.net
12/15	Sa	Payson	Dave Hallock	303-258-3672	eldoradh@rmi.net
12/15	Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629	batesd@cox.net
12/16	Su	Jerome	Julie Wills	928-300-9775	jwills282@hotmail.com
12/16	Su	Saint David	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/17	Mo	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-925-5567	duerksen@msn.com
12/17	Mo	Phoenix-Tres Rios	David Powell	602-441-5508	vireo@vireos.com
12/19	We	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	ctomoff@prescott.edu
12/20	Th	Patagonia	Abbie Zeltzer	520-604-6320	amindajar@gmail.com
12/21	Fr	Elfrida	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/22	Sa	Atascosa Highlands	Rich Hoyer	520-325-5310	birdernaturalist@me.com
12/22	Sa	Camp Verde	Bea Cooley	928-526-5069	bea.cooley@gmail.com
12/22	Sa	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012	hassayampacbc@hotmail.com
12/22	Sa	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221	tedmouras@mindspring.com
12/22	Sa	Timber Mesa	Mary Ellen Bittorf	928-367-2462	maryellen12@cablone.net
12/26	We	Superior	Cynthia Donald	480-283-4515	planres@earthlink.net
12/27	Th	Bill Williams Delta	Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144	kathleen_blair@fws.gov
12/27	Th	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187	aplomado@cox.net
12/28	Fr	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Malcolm Chesworth	203-798-0223	malcolmsc@yahoo.com
12/28	Fr	Havas NWR	DeeDee DeLorenzo	928-758-2707	poncho@citlink.net
12/29	Sa	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Terry Blows	928-774-8028	terence.blows@nau.edu
12/29	Sa	Portal	Jackie Lewis	520-558-2287	winjac12@vtc.net
12/30	Su	Sedona	Rich Armstrong	928-282-3675	richarmstrong@q.com
01/02	We	Carefree	Walter Thurber	480-483-6450	wathurber@cox.net
01/03	Th	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267	john_spence@nps.gov
01/05	Sa	Appleton-Whittell	Robert Weissler	520-234-1792	weissler@aves.org
01/05	Sa	Dudleville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	d_jenness@hotmail.com
Unknown		Tucson Valley			

Nearby New Mexico Count

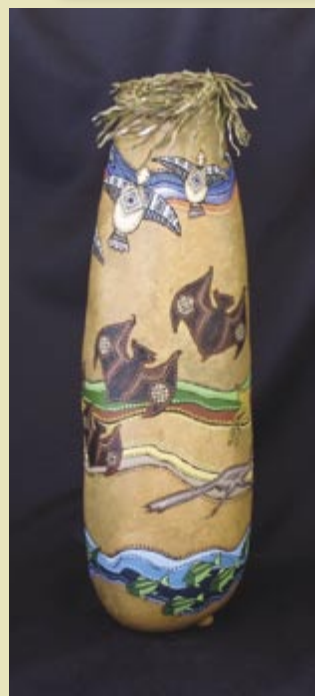
12/30	Su	Peloncillo Mountains	Nicholas Pederson	505-417-8665	ndpederson83at gmail.com
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My life as an artist began with a garden! One year, for the fun of it I planted some gourds. When two bumper crops filled my porch ten years ago, a crafting class at the Desert Botanical Garden gave me a new direction for my creativity.

I'm a Tucson native, and I thrive in the desert climate. My childhood was filled with desert exploration, travel to the beaches of Cholla Bay, Mexico and trips all over the US. I graduated from Arizona State University with a degree in Wildlife Biology and went on to work as a seasonal ranger in Yellowstone Park and then moved to Montana for ten years where I received a degree in photography from Montana State University. After deciding snow was not my element I returned to Arizona. I worked for Arizona State Parks for 20 years and when the recession hit and I was laid off I decided to take my retirement and work full time on my gourd art. My art has always been about exploring new things, and for me, this variety has always been the spice of life.

As with my gardens where I like to try growing new plants, gourds have been the perfect canvas for almost endless treatments. I can paint them, carve them, wood burn and draw on them, and even embellish them with Arizona minerals and natural fibers; always trying new techniques and media, I look on each gourd as a unique adventure in artistic possibilities! Spending most of my life in Arizona the culture, landscapes and colors of the state constantly appear in my work.

For more information or to view more of Nora's work, go to www.mesquitegourds.com.



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Time-dated material; do not delay!

Monthly Meeting

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

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

Membership Information

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

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert, 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* 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* 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, Emily Morris: monarchmorris@gmail.com

Opinions

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

Reprinting of material

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

This publication is printed on recycled paper.



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