



# The Cactus Wren · dition



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SPRING - 2023



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### On the Cover

Turkey Vulture: the Darth Vader of the avian world stands guard from a snag

Photo by Lyndie Mason Warner

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Spring has arrived and birds are on the move. Migration is a fascinating time for birders because there is opportunity to look for rare and uncommon species.

Arizona is part of the Pacific flyway -a "highway" of various habitats that Neotropical birds visit on their journey to summer breeding grounds. Precious riparian corridors that offer

food, water and shelter for these migrants and other wildlife are at risk, particularly in the arid Southwest. Climate change, growing cities, industrial agriculture, and the 27 year-long drought all threaten our water resources. Livestock grazing is particularly devastating to desert riparian habitats.

Endangered species such as Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Southwestern Willow Flycatcher are especially vulnerable. Areas such as the lower Salt River are in distress and in need of restoration. Since the establishment of the horse management agreement there has been an explosion in the feral horse population, coming at a cost to the river, birds, plants and other inhabitants. The Maricopa Audubon Society is committed to protecting this area from being decimated by over 600 starving feral horses that have already overwhelmed much of it.

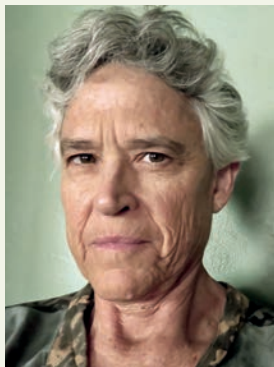
Another vulnerable habitat is the proposed McMicken Dam Conservation Area in the White Tank Mountains northeastern watershed. Last January, other MAS Board members and I surveyed the desert habitat that is being trampled by off-road vehicles and trespass cattle. Over 100 species of birds, including seven of conservation concern, and ten foot tall pencil cacti have been documented there. MAS is supporting Anthony Robinson, a City of Surprise Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioner, in his efforts to have the city preserve this area of undeveloped desert.

Spring is a great time to visit these two areas in the valley. I look forward to seeing many of you enjoying birdwatching in this beautiful weather, perhaps attending one of MAS's scheduled field trips.



# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This year marks the 70th anniversary of Maricopa Audubon Society. This issue features clippings from our first newsletter. The historical theme continues with Tom Gatz' first in a series on eponymous bird names, this one featuring birds named for John Cassin. Duane Morse offers a low-tech way to prepare for birding adventures to exotic locations, and Kathe Anderson describes her experience as a guest speaker on the podcast "Looking at Birds." Volunteer opportunities and events are listed, and photographers are asked to contribute to a new bird book (see announcements). We remember Dr. John Alcock, and advocate for land conservation near the White Tank Mountains. I want to thank our photographers who graciously provided many of the fantastic images in this issue - Jim Burns, Tom Cheknis, Loren Hupe, Gordon Karre, Tom Mangelsdorf, Marceline VandeWater, Matt van Wallene, and new contributor Lyndie Mason Warner.



## COMMITTEES/SUPPORT

### Bookstore

Sochetra Ly

### Poet Laureate

David Chorlton

### Associate Editors

Vicki Hire

Mark Larson

[www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org)

*"...I wanted a front yard with a true desert feel, and since cattle and their by-products are universal in the Sonoran Desert, I knew I had to import a few cowpies to attach the seal of authenticity to my creation."*

*-John Alcock, In A Desert Garden, Love & Death Among The Insects*

## 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.



Support Maricopa Audubon as part of **Fry's Community Rewards Program**. Register your Fry's VIP card and select Maricopa Audubon #WW583 as your non-profit organization at no cost to you. Please visit Fry's Community Rewards online or visit your local Fry's to register.

## Call for Volunteers

### Boyce Thompson Arboretum Flavor of Arizona Festival

15 April 2023 | 10:00-3:00

1. MAS needs people to talk about MAS, point out birds and lead short bird walks at this BTA food and drink festival. Contact [Thomas.Emily@asu.edu](mailto:Thomas.Emily@asu.edu).
2. BTA needs volunteers for various 3 or 4-hour shifts plus a pre-event training shift, date TBD. Positions include greeter, set-up, parking lot, check in, ticket booth, guest mgt., vendor area, info desk, first aid station, custodial, and tear down. Volunteers get an event T-shirt, free entry, water/snacks. Apply at [flavorofarizona.com](http://flavorofarizona.com) (scroll down to "volunteer.")

### Global Big Day

Saturday, 13 May

In Arizona, hundreds of birders count spring migrants for the Global Big Day, sponsored by eBird. The state effort is coordinated by the Arizona Field Ornithologists, and teams are organized by county. A list of the county coordinators and the results for counts since 2004 are on the AZFO website. If you want to help count birds on that day contact a county coordinator. You can be flexible about the time you spend in the field, or just count birds in your yard. As in many previous years we don't have a coordinator for under-birded Greenlee County. This has led to modest participation and lower totals than other counties. The total for the county last year was only 34. We are asking for volunteers to help get the highest 20-year total for Greenlee County. If you'd like to organize or participate on a team in Greenlee County, contact Doug Jenness [dougjennessATgmail.com](mailto:dougjennessATgmail.com), State Coordinator, GBD Count.

**Publicity Chair Wanted.** Please contact any board member if you would like information on volunteering for this MAS board of directors position.

**Sign up for the e-newsletter!**

To subscribe, email:  
[Maricopaaudubonsociety@gmail.com](mailto:Maricopaaudubonsociety@gmail.com)

*Note: We do not use the email list for anything other than the described purpose.*



# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Give Dead Birds a Purpose

Longtime MAS member and contributor to this newsletter, Matt van Wallene, is collecting bird specimens for a feather study. If you've ever read any of Matt's articles, you know his intense curiosity about all things birds. Matt has a state-issued Scientific Activity License to transport and possess dead birds. If you come across a dead bird in your yard or place of business (window strikes) or are a hunter, please contact Matt (480) 204-1104, zoutedrop@gmail.com.

## Bird Photographs Wanted

Steve Prager and Melissa Fratello's field guide to 400 species of Arizona and New Mexico birds will be published by Timber Press in the Fall of 2024. To learn more about the species, site, and habitat photos requested, the photo quality desired, and details about how to submit your work, contact aznmbirds.timberpress@gmail.com.

## Tom Mangelsdorf Wins Photo Contest

Cactus Wren-dition Photographer Tom Mangelsdorf's image of a family of Burrowing Owls was chosen from among 1900 entries to represent March in the 2023 Arizona Game and Fish Department's 2024 Calendar. Congrats, Tom! See Tom's article on page 19.

## Nominating Committee

The Maricopa Audubon Society's annual election of Board of Directors will take place at the April monthly meeting. Any Society member may submit nominations to the Nominating Committee. You can even nominate yourself!

Tim Flood (602) 618-1853, tjflood@att.net  
Brian Ison (602) 909-0541, lwrkenai@cox.net  
Elias Esquer (480) 968-4934, ojo68@cox.net

All MAS Friends and National Audubon members assigned to MAS are eligible to vote. Make sure your membership is up to date. You can (re)join online: <http://maricopaaudubon.org>. The basic \$20 fee includes the quarterly The Cactus Wren•dition. Anything above that is tax deductible.

## The Big Sit! Final Tally

MAS collected \$1,176 for the 2022 Big Sit! Fundraiser. Thank you again to everyone who participated, pledged and donated! You are the best!

## NEWSFLASH

All annual MAS Friends Memberships will now begin or renew on April 1 and will be prorated. Current Friends Memberships will be prorated as of April 1, 2023. Look for details on the backpage, on our website or on our eNewsletter. Contact the MAS Membership Chair or MAS Treasurer if you have questions.

## Nesting Roadrunners

Recognized Flagstaff-based nature writer Elizabeth Blaker is writing a book *Sing Mountains, Sing Deserts: The curious lives of southwestern birds*. She is asking for help locating nesting roadrunners to take photographs from a respectful distance to include in a chapter on roadrunners. Please email her at elizabethblaker1@gmail.com. MAS prefers to have you accompany her to the nest site to assure that the birds are not disturbed.



Greater Roadrunner.  
Photo by Tom Cheknis

# MEETINGS...

We are conducting hybrid meetings, both in-person and via zoom. Links are posted on our website and Facebook page a few days before the meeting.

MAS holds meetings (membership is not required) on the first Tuesday of the month from September through April at Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N. 64th Street, Scottsdale. Meetings start at 7:30 PM. Come at 7:00 PM to socialize. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at 6:00 PM at Saigon Bowl Restaurant, 8213 E. Roosevelt St., Scottsdale, AZ 85257. The May meeting is our annual banquet.



APRIL 4

Jim Shepherd

## Discover Plants of the Sonoran Desert and its Birds

A lifelong amateur naturalist, Jim's retirement allowed him to return to his love of nature. He has been a volunteer tour guide at Boyce Thompson Arboretum for the past eight years, teaching about arid land plants. Most recently, his book *A Walk In The Wallace Desert Garden-Discovering Desert Secrets* profiles 48 arid land plants, many found in the Sonoran Desert. Jim will guide us through Sonoran Desert plants and the habitat they provide for birds.

MAY 2

## 69th Annual MAS Banquet

Franciscan Renewal Center, 5802 East Lincoln Drive, Scottsdale, AZ 85252

6:00 PM BYOB Social Hour, Raffle, & Silent Auction (Buy It Now option on our website!). Raffle tickets available at the door.

7:00 PM Buffet Dinner (includes vegan option).



Register here

Cost: \$30.00 per person. Reservations required. Deadline to register April 15. No-shows will be billed. You may pay at the door (cash or check) or shorten the line by paying online (QR code) or mail checks payable to Maricopa Audubon Society to MAS Banquet, c/o Vicki Hire, PO Box 603, Chandler, AZ 85244. Our agenda will include induction of our new Board and presentation of the 14th Annual Herb Fibel Memorial Award for distinguished and outstanding service to Maricopa Audubon Society.



Hudsonian Godwit  
Photo by Bruce

Guest Speaker: Bruce Beehler

## 30,000 Miles in Search of Godwits, from the Mexican Border to the Arctic Ocean

Between 2019 and 2022, Beehler completed five field trips in search of Hudsonian Godwits. Beehler visited stop-over sites through the Great Plains; visited breeding habitat in western Alaska, Churchill, Manitoba, and the High Arctic of western Canada; and did field surveys at a famous autumn staging site in James Bay. In all, Beehler traveled solo by car more than 30,000 miles, encountering Hudsonian Godwits in ten states and provinces. He also spent time with Marbled and Bar-tailed Godwits, and 33 additional shorebird species. Beehler accompanied various fieldworkers studying godwits and other species in remote and iconic field sites. Beehler will recount the highlights of his more than five months in the field, from Nome and Point Barrow to Tuktoyaktuk, Moosonee, and Monomoy Island.



Bruce Beehler is an ornithologist, conservationist, and naturalist. He received his PhD from Princeton studying the behavioral ecology of the birds-of-paradise of Papua New Guinea. Beehler has spent much of his scientific career studying and conserving birds and their forest habitats. He has published seventeen books and monographs and authored scores of technical and popular articles about birds and nature including *The Birds of Paradise* (1998), *The Birds of New Guinea* (1986, 2015) and the two-volume *Ecology of Papua* (2007). He is a Research Associate, Bird Division, National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution, and a Scientific Affiliate of the American Bird Conservancy. Today Beehler carries out natural history studies and writing focused on wildlife and natural places in North America.





Photo by Tom Cheknis

# FIELD TRIPS

by Mark Horlings

- Participation in field trips risks exposure to infectious diseases. If you have any symptoms of illness or have been exposed to Covid-19, stay home.
- For Tonto National Forest Day Use Passes, visit USDA Tonto Pass.
- MAS encourages carpooling. Please cover your driver's gas at the recommended rate of 10¢ per mile per rider.
- The ABA has adopted principles of birding ethics. Check them online or ask your field trip leader.
- Wear neutral colors and sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring binoculars, sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, and water.

To register, go to [Ticketleap.com](https://www.ticketleap.com) and search under "Maricopa Audubon" or use the links on the MAS Field Trips webpage. If you cannot attend, please cancel your reservation so someone on the wait list can join. To cancel, contact the leader (see Ticketleap) or Field Trip Chair Mark Horlings (602) 505-3455 | [markhorlings@yahoo.com](mailto:markhorlings@yahoo.com).

## Base and Meridian Wildlife Area

**TUESDAY, MARCH 21**

This site provides prime access to riparian habitat along the Gila River, attracting a wide variety of bird species. We should get a great mix of wintering birds before they head north, along with some early arrivals from the south. Spring migration begins early in Arizona, and Neotropical migrants like vireos and warblers are anticipated. Ridgway's Rails, a local specialty, may also have returned. Least Bitterns are almost always seen here. Who knows what we might turn up? Meet at the parking area just beyond the entrance to Phoenix Raceway off Avondale Boulevard.

Time: 6:45 AM to 9:45 AM

Limit: 15

Difficulty: 2-3 (paths are dirt and we may cover 3-4 miles).

**LEADER: TORIN WATERS**

## Scottsdale Ranch Park

**SATURDAY, MARCH 25**

This urban park has stands of mesquite, oak and palo verde, Aleppo pines and olive trees. We will also visit Lake Serena on the north side to check for ducks and other aquatic birds. Past trips have yielded Lewis' Woodpecker, Black-and-white Warbler, juncos, vireos and other warblers. Meet at the east parking lot south of the tennis courts, 10400 East Via Linda, Scottsdale.

Time: 6:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 1 (easy walking on mostly level concrete paths.)

**LEADER: BRIAN ISON**

## Mt. Ord Exploration

**SATURDAY, APRIL 1**

During migration, you never know what we might see as we travel from high desert through chaparral to pine forests at the top of Mount Ord, looking for migrants and residents setting up territories. Expect to see Black-chinned Sparrows, Scott's Orioles, and Zone-tailed Hawks. Maybe towhees, sparrows, and warblers that nest in the area - Virginia's, Olive, Red-faced, Grace's, and Black-throated Gray.

Acorn and Hairy Woodpeckers are likely. Bring bins, field guide, water, snacks, hat, and coat for the top of Mt. Ord. Meet in the back parking lot of Denny's, 17053 Shea Blvd., Ft. Hills.

Restrictions: must be fully vaccinated.

Time: 7 AM - 12:30 PM

Limit: 11

Difficulty: 2 (rocky road up the mountain and a 1 kilometer hike)

**LEADER: LARRY LANGSTAFF**

## South Mountain - Pima Canyon

**TUESDAY, APRIL 4**

This low elevation canyon in the east end of South Mountain may reveal interesting migrants, besides the typical Sonoran Desert birds. We hope to find Gilded Flickers, Black-tailed Gnatcatchers, Ladder-backed Woodpeckers, a Greater Roadrunner, Cactus Wren and the Costa's Hummingbird nesting area in Pima Wash. This is the northernmost location for elephant trees in Maricopa County; they host Gray Vireos in winter. Let's hope for a good spring flush of ephemeral flowers. Meet at the Pima Canyon Trailhead (4500 E. Pima Canyon Road) parking lot. Bring bins, field guide, water, sun protection, snacks, hiking boots.

Time: 6:30 AM - 11 AM

Limit: 12

Difficulty: 3 (Walk 3 miles through sandy wash and over rocks)

**LEADER: LARRY LANGSTAFF**

## Agua Fria National Monument

**FRIDAY, APRIL 7**

Birds maybe. Wildflowers, butterflies, lizards, trees and ecology for sure. [mjplagens@arizonensis.org](mailto:mjplagens@arizonensis.org) or text (602) 459-5224 for more info.

Time: 6 AM - 2:00 PM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 1.5

**LEADER: MICHAEL PLAGENS**

## Jewel of the Creek

**FRIDAY, APRIL 14**

We'll start in Scottsdale, and explore this exquisite migrant trap north of Cave Creek for about 2 hours, then wrap up perhaps at the Grotto Café in Cave Creek. We'll see common desert species, plus whatever orioles, tanagers, warblers, vireos and flycatchers might be there. No facilities. Meeting place and carpooling TBD.

Restrictions: must be vaccinated against COVID.

Time: 5:30 AM - 10 AM

Limit: 8

Difficulty: 2-3

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

## Brown's Ranch Trail, McDowell-Sonoran Preserve

**SATURDAY, APRIL 15**

Meet at the trailhead on Alma School Rd., a mile north of Dynamite. Expect to see resident species - Harris's Hawk, Verdin, Black-throated Sparrow and some Spring migrants.

Time: 6:30 AM - 10:30 AM

**Be Social!** Find MAS on Facebook

facebook.com/MaricopaAudubonSociety



Limit: 12  
Difficulty: 2 (Mostly easy hiking on a marked trail; some steep sections)  
**LEADER: BRIAN ISON**

## Rio Salado Audubon Center

**SATURDAY, MAY 6**

Paths along the river generally reveal a mix of songbirds and wading birds, as well as occasional ducks. Bring water, snacks, binos, hat and sunscreen. The Pulliam Center should open about the time we finish. We will meet in the parking lot at the Nina Mason Pulliam Audubon Center, 3131 South Central Ave, Phoenix.

Time: 6 AM – 9 AM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 2 (some small hills along the path; not wheelchair accessible)

**LEADER: VERONICA HERON**

## Prescott

**MONDAY, MAY 8**

Leave from Phoenix to explore various Prescott sites, including the Highlands Center, Watson Woods Riparian Preserve and at least one lake. In addition to year-round higher elevation birds like Acorn Woodpeckers and

nuthatches, we hope to see some Neotropical visitors such as tanagers, vireos, warblers, confusing flycatchers and grosbeaks. Meeting place, carpooling, and lunch plans TBD. Restrictions: All participants must be vaccinated against Covid.

Time: 5 AM - 2 PM

Limit: 8

Difficulty: 2

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

## Dragonfly Walk along the Salt River

**SATURDAY, MAY 20**

We will visit several sites (Granite Reef, Phon D. Sutton, and perhaps Pebble Beach). Each location provides a slightly different set of dragonfly species. All sites are easily accessible. We found 22 species at Granite Reef within the last year. Bring close-focus binoculars if you have them, hat, water, and snack. Meet at Starbucks, 2832 N. Power Rd, Mesa at 8:30 AM to carpool to the sites. Tonto pass required.

Time: 8:30 AM - 2 PM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 2 (easy walking on dirt paths but in hot weather)

**LEADER: PIERRE DEVICHE**



Rose-breasted Grosbeak.  
Photo by David Chorlton

## Chaconne

BY DAVID CHORLTON

Here comes time dancing  
on the strings: echo of the good days,  
dissonance  
of the sad. Through the window  
there's a bird far from its range and out  
of season to be this far  
south. The bow  
drawn across the centuries  
plays notes from an age as distant as the  
grosbeak's  
territory. It's best  
when the violin is as old as the music.  
Not long  
after daybreak with a desert chill still in the air  
the thrashers, flickers, hummingbirds  
bring day to life. The fast notes  
stream into the light  
and then harmony  
is broken with a sudden  
scattering  
that leaves the back yard silent.  
First to return are the White-  
crowned sparrows, followed by the goldfinches.  
Just when a certain passage suggests  
nostalgia the next one  
opens up the sky  
and what doesn't belong here  
suddenly does. The weathers are unknown  
that blew the bird off course  
and no-one ever knows  
the forest  
growing inside the violin.



widow skimmer *Libellula luctuosa*.  
Photo by Pierre Deviche



# LAKE PLEASANT FIELDTRIP REPORT

By Charles Babbitt

Every winter large lakes in Arizona routinely host a few rare and uncommon water birds including ducks, grebes and loons. The winter of 2022-23 had a higher number than usual of these overwintering species at Lake Pleasant northwest of Phoenix. Also rare is a MAS field trip to this county park but in mid-January a group of nine enthusiastic birders searched the lake from various sites and were able to see most of these species. They included Greater Scaup, Horned Grebe, Common and Barrow's Goldeneye, Common Loon and a beautiful Long-tailed Duck, an arctic breeder and life bird for several of us. It was 37° when we started out; a light coating of snow covered the tops of the Bradshaw Mountains. We were fortunate to have a relatively calm morning. Lake Pleasant is often very windy making it difficult to spot diving birds in the choppy waters. Our first birds of the morning were a pair of female Greater Scaup just offshore at 10 Lane Boat Ramp. We studied them for a while, discussing field marks that distinguish them from Lesser Scaup. Other identification challenges included separating Horned from Eared Grebe, Barrow's from Common Goldeneye, Double-crested from Neotropic Cormorant, Common from Red-breasted Merganser and Common Loon from other possible loon species. We ended the trip at the park's north entrance in Yavapai County. There we spotted a lone Clark's Grebe swimming with a group of almost identical looking Western Grebes. Thanks to all the participants who turned out for this very productive and exciting day of birding. Checklist: <https://ebird.org/hotspot/L157639>  
*Charles Babbitt is MAS Conservation Chair.*



Long-tailed Duck. Photo by Gordon Karre



Common Loon. Photo by Lyndie Mason Warner



Horned Grebe. Photo by Marceline VandeWater.



Barrow's Goldeneye pair. Photo by Jim Burns



# REMEMBERING DR. JOHN ALCOCK

## 1942 - 2023

Dr. John Alcock, ASU Regents Professor and pioneer in ecology and animal behavior, died on January 15, 2023 at age 80. His love of birdwatching and nature began when he was given a pair of binoculars at the age of seven. This gift sparked his life-long passion for conservation ecology. His dissertation was on learning in birds. He received his PhD from Harvard in 1969 studying under Ernst Mayr and E.O. Wilson. In 1970, John shifted from studying bird behavior to looking at insects in the field.

A field trip to the Chiricahuas while employed at the University of Washington was pivotal. He moved to Arizona, began a career at ASU that spanned over 3 decades, and influenced countless students, colleagues, and community members with his contagious love and keen observations of animal behavior. He was an award winning author of eight books on natural history, including *In A Desert Garden: Love and Death Among the Insects* (1999) which advocated for desert landscaping to benefit the native species that had been displaced. His front yard vegetable garden stood out amongst the grass and rock yards in his Tempe neighborhood and allowed John to observe insects without leaving home.

John enthusiastically shared his knowledge in programs and field trips for MAS including one on the orchids of western Australia. His talk on *When the Rains Come: A Naturalist's Year in the Sonoran Desert* (2009), included the poignant observation that even the steadfast, mighty saguaro eventually succumbs, as John himself will one day.

It was another of John's books, *Sonoran Desert Spring* (1994) which prompted



Dr. John Alcock marking a tarantula hawk on Usury Mountain, Tonto National Forest, 27 April 2016. Photo by Laurie Nessel.

one reader to join me on a MAS field trip with John to his "patch" up Usury Mountain where he studied hilltopping tarantula hawks. Rick recalls that day as being "...magical. It was a fascinating morning. John's love of the desert and all its inhabitants was so evident. We were so lucky that he was willing to share this love with all of us." John relished procuring a key to the

utility road that got us away from the main road and closer to the hilltop. We hiked to the top on a gorgeous April morning and John remarked how



he loves coming up just for the view, which he didn't have to pay a penny for. But his goal was to net all the pepsis wasps, mark them, and note the plant where they were found. He had all the plants catalogued and memorized. Most of the wasps were stingless males waiting for females. A web search of "hilltopping" invariably references scholarly papers by John. Our survey that day was conducted eight years after the professor had retired. If only everyone could have such passion and pleasure from their life's work. John was humble, generous, kind, adventurous, and had an impish sense of

humor. His legacy lives on in all the people he touched and those yet to discover the treasure of writings he left behind. He will be missed. - Laurie Nessel

When presented with the idea of insects many bird watchers first think of mosquitoes in the Everglades, or ticks in New England with Lyme disease, or deer flies about the head, or perhaps no-see-ums near mangroves. After that, bugs might be hard to love.

If you love your garden and the beautiful plants there the idea of insects brings to mind tattered leaves, chewed up flowers, or worms in your fruit. After that bugs might be hard to love.

John Alcock was devoted to changing your opinion. His life mission was for us to love all of nature. His books, his lectures, and his field trips all went to that aim.

I first encountered John in 1980 when he came to the University of Arizona to give some lectures in my insect ecology class (my professor happened to be one of his students.) With a ton of energy and enthusiasm, he marched a cadre of grad students to the top of some mountains near Tucson where we were to try to understand why butterflies, bot flies, and a suite of other bugs were gathering there.

Later in my education I encountered another professor whose love of nature was infectious. Lincoln Brower studied monarch butterflies, wanting to know where they went in migration, why they migrated, and why birds seem to avoid eating them. All kinds of interesting questions. It so happens he had infected John Alcock with the same curiosity back when John was Lincoln's own student!

John likewise encouraged and mentored many many students to pursue the mysteries, the wonders, and the hard science that nature presents us to solve. So he turned his attention to conservation knowing that every extinction was like burning a stack of unread mystery books. Let's carry on John's legacy by embracing all the wonders of nature.

-Michael J. Plagens

*A celebration of life was held at the Desert Botanical Gardens in February. Donations in his name may be made to the Center for Biological Diversity (search CBD - Alcock).*



Dr. John Alcock.  
Photo by Rick Clarke.





# ROADRUNNER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE MARICOPA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume I Phoenix, Arizona, June, 1954 Number 1

## Wickenburg Field Trip Big Success

### The Roadrunner

The ROADRUNNER is published monthly by The Maricopa Audubon Society, a branch of The National Audubon Society, in Maricopa County Arizona.

#### STAFF

Editor.....James Werner  
 Field Notes.....Malvin Plunkett  
 SOCIETY OFFICERS  
 President: Dr. Hugh Hanson, 12 West 11th. Street, Tempe, Arizona.  
 Vice-President: Mr. William H. Patey, 5200 North Central, Phoenix, Arizona.  
 Secretary: James R. Werner, P.O. Box 145, Goodyear, Arizona.  
 Treasurer: Miss Jane Horswell, 306 East Malby Drive, Phoenix, Arizona.  
 Field Trips: Mr. Malvin Plunkett, 3821 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.

THERE HAVE BEEN some very interesting sight records for the valley during May and early June, of uncommon water birds. See page 2 for complete story.

by Mal Plunkett

On Sunday afternoon, May 2, 27 nature lovers made the 40 mile round trip out Vulture Road at Wickenburg to study flowers and birds under the leadership of Mr. William G. Bass and Mr. John Kelly. Our first stop was to see the Mariposa Lilly, the state flower of Utah, where they call it Sage Lilly. A few of the many other flowers we saw were: Desert Phlox, Blue Palo Verde, Desert Ironwood, Paper Flower, Locoweed, Desert Senna, Prickly Poppy, Blue Lupen, Purple Lupen, Hummingbird Bush, Fiddleneck, Turpentine Broom, Buckwheat, Desert Marigold, and many other kinds of cacti.

That afternoon Mr. Bass had received a call that someone had killed a parent Red-tailed Hawk and that its young were starving. The nest was our goal and we set out. We saw the dead adult and a dead young bird too. However one fellow was very much alive and with hamburger from Mr. Bass and food from the remaining adult who was flying above us we were assured this friend of mine had a chance (Continued on page 2)

## Society To Hold Birthday Meeting

This July, The Maricopa Audubon Society will be one year old. A birthday meeting will be held at 8:00 PM July 1, at the home of Mrs. Lucy Warner, 126 East 14th. Street, Tempe. There will be an excellent program and a short business meeting. Everyone is urged to attend. If you are planning to come, please call Miss Helen Kent at the Phx. Adult Center and make your reservation. Call as soon as possible.

## White Pelicans Land; Starlings in Valley

Many interesting and unusual sight records have been made during late May and June. The most important ones are as follows:

- Black Tern. A pair were seen at MacDonalds River Ranch.
- White Pelican. A single bird and a pair were seen at the Palo Verde Marsh.
- White-faced Glossy Ibis. Twelve at MacDonalds Ranch, 5 at Williams Dairy Farm.
- American Egret. Parent and two young at Williams Dairy Farm, two at Palo Verde.
- Snowy Egret. Six at MacDonalds.
- Anthony Green Heron. Seen at MacDonalds.
- Least Bittern. Two at Palo Verde.
- Wilson's Phalarope. One to three seen at different times at Williams.
- Black-necked Stilt. Two at Williams, 1 at Palo Verde.
- Dowitcher. One at Williams.
- Starlings. Four at Tempe, 10 at MacDonalds.
- Red-eyed Cowbird. Seen at Tal-Mi-Wi Pond, Coons Bluff, Bartlett Dam, Phoenix, and the Black Canyon Hwy.
- Long-billed Marsh Wren. Numerous and nesting at Palo Verde.

WICKENBURG FIELD TRIP Cont. p. 1  
 survive. The Saguaro in which the Hawks had nested was right by the road. The man who killed these birds should be informed that there are only two harmful Hawks, the Sharp-shinned and Cooper's.  
 Mr Bass had a ladder attached to a platform on top of his car which enabled him to climb to the nest. He showed the young Hawk to all of us.

Mr. Tony Boettchard suggested the excellent picnic supper that was prepared for us that night. We ate in the beautiful remada at Mr. Bass' modern Motor Court in Wickenburg, La Sesta. Mrs. Nett Aldous, Miss Lucie Johnson, Mrs. Paul Corwin and Mrs. Bill Bass were our hostesses.

After the field trip and the picnic we enjoyed three hours of desert movies and slides which certainly equal in interest "The Living Desert". We all agreed to this. Red-tailed Hawks learning to fly, Saguaros in bloom, a flash flood spreading over a parched wash, these are only three of the pictures.

We certainly are grateful to our Wickenburg friends. Ten are now Audubon members and more are joining.

## Field Trip To Be Taken To Verde River Sat.

There will be a trip made Sat. July 3 to the Verde River above Fort McDowell. This is really a bird paradise which we located on June 20th.  
 Phone CR 4-5787 if you want to go and let Mal Plunkett know.

- MAS motto, June 1954

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully to defend from waste, the natural resources of my country its soil and minerals, its forests, waters, and wildlife.

## CONSERVATION: The Echo Park Dam Issue

Reprinted from: The New York Times, June 6, 1954

The repeated revisions and admissions of error in the Bureau of Reclamation's own figures on the Dinosaur National Monument controversy show the absurdity of the argument that this question has been sufficiently studied, that all the facts are in and that the superiority of Echo Park dam over any alternatives has not been conclusively demonstrated. It has not been; and the desperation with which proponents of this highly debatable scheme have been working to push it through congress indicates a well-grounded fear that further examination of the whole matter may prove fatal to their cause.  
 Only a few days before the House Interior Committee approved by one vote, the authorization bill for the Upper Colorado Basin development, which included Echo Park dam, Undersecretary of the Interior, Ralph A. Tudor had admitted that figures that he had supplied earlier in the year to prove the desirability of Echo Park dam were wrong.

The error involved estimates of the greater evaporation loss that would be incurred by an alternate proposal, as compared with the loss at Echo Park and its companion, Split Mountain. This is a matter of great importance in view of Undersecretary Tudor's testimony that "in the final analysis, the increased losses of water by evaporation from alternative sites is the fundamental issue upon which the department has felt it necessary to give any consideration to the Echo Park dam and reservoir."  
 (next column)

#### REPEATED ERRORS

Mr. Tudor has already informed the House committee that certain figures supplied in his original testimony had been incorrect. Now he states that he has "been advised by the bureau of Reclamation that the figures which they supplied me ... were in error" again. In each case the relative advantage of Echo Park over the alternative was cut down. Here is the picture explained by Howard Zahniser, Executive Secretary of the Wilderness Society, one of the many organizations that have been fighting Echo Park dam as an entirely unwarranted invasion on the National Park system.

"In 1950 the Bureau of Reclamation claimed that a dam at Echo Park would save 350,000 acre-feet of water a year, compared with... the alternate sight. By 1953 the (Continued on page 4)

## Echo Park Dam Bill To Go Before House

Dr. Gordon Bender, chairman of the Committee on Conservation and Education asks that all members review the information on the Echo Park Dam Project (for information see Audubon Magazine, Jan-Feb 1954 pp. 13, 29). After reading these accounts if you feel you can commit yourself, we urge you to write to your representatives and tell them how you feel on the subject.  
 This bill has passed the Senate and will be on the floor of the House very soon. If you desire to take any action, please hurry!

## CONSERVATION: ECHO PARK DAM ISSUE (Cont. from p. 3)

Bureau's figure had changed to an estimate between 100,000 and 200,000 acre-feet a year. In 1954 the figure was placed.....at 165,000 acre-feet. Then it was amended in March to 70,000 acre-feet. Now he is compelled to amend it again down to 25,000 acre-feet. It is no wonder that conservationists have found the Bureau's statements contradictory and have surmised that this evaporation argument is being used as a plausible pretext rather than a sound reason."

....the opposition of conservationists to Echo Park dam does not imply opposition to water and power development for the west. It merely expresses a demand that the National Park system be preserved intact, or at the very least, that every possible alternative be

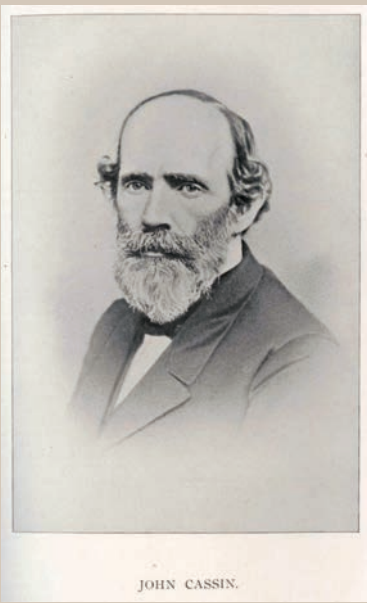
thoroughly explored before a final decision is made to destroy it.

This demand is particularly pertinent in view of the fact that it is the people of all the country who would not only lose this unique scenic quality of this great natural wonder if the dam were constructed, but also would be paying an enormous price---in dollars and cents as well as in intangible values---for its destruction!

Maricopa Audubon Society was formed in July 1953. Here is a glimpse into the early years through the pages of our very first newsletter, then called *The Roadrunner*, eleven months after the chapter formed.

The bird names have changed, but the fight to conserve bird habitat hasn't. As longtime Conservation Chair Bob Witzeman put it, "MAS's conservation legacy has been longstanding." Find more MAS history on our webpage - About Us - Chapter History.





# THE PERSON BEHIND THE BIRD NAME PART I: JOHN CASSIN (1813-1869)

By Tom Gatz



Cassin's Auklet. Photo by Matt van Wallene.

Birds named after people are under scrutiny these days. In her recent publication, *The Bird Name Book* (2022)<sup>1</sup>, author and bird-tour leader, Susan Myers, mentioned that many of the people for whom birds are named “have a checkered background.” Recently, McCown’s Longspur was renamed Thick-billed Longspur after concerns were raised that its eponym, Captain John P. McCown, participated in U.S. government campaigns against indigenous peoples and later resigned from the Union Army to join the Confederacy.

Some argue that it is wrong to impose our current values and judge behavior in the past that was considered acceptable at the time, while others contend that it is time to turn the page and get rid of names from the past that are associated with these behaviors. Those advocating changing these controversial bird names sometimes refer to them as “verbal statues”: a reference to Confederate statues, which have been the subject of removal for years.<sup>2</sup>

There is also a movement to change the more than 100 bird names honoring individuals, regardless of their past behavior, and replace

them with more descriptive names. Others suggest only changing those named after individuals with questionable pasts.<sup>3</sup> Either way, this may not bode well for the Lucifer Hummingbird (see sidebar).

John Cassin was a major figure in nineteenth century ornithology and, as far as I can tell, wasn’t involved in anything untoward (even by modern standards) that might warrant renaming the bird species that bear his name. This is a good thing for birders because if anything sketchy turns up, we might have to learn new names for Cassin’s Auklet, Cassin’s Kingbird, Cassin’s Vireo, Cassin’s Sparrow and Cassin’s Finch, as well as a cicada and a mineral (Orthoclase variety Cassinite); and the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club’s journal *Cassinia*.

Cassin was born in 1813 to a Quaker family in Pennsylvania. At the young age of 20 he helped found the Delaware County Institute of Science. By age 29 in 1842 he was made honorary curator of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences which, at the time, possessed the largest bird collection in the U.S. with over 25,000

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Cassin's Finch. Photo by Lyndie Mason Warner.

## Lucifer Hummingbird

According to Kenn Kaufman<sup>4</sup>, the British scientist William Swainson probably wasn’t thinking of the devil when he named this bird in 1827. The name “Lucifer” has had various meanings. For example, in ancient Rome it was the name given to Venus when that planet appeared in the morning sky— appropriately enough, since Lucifer is based on Latin words meaning “light bearer” or “light bringer.” Kaufman suggests that Swainson probably chose the name after seeing how light reflected from the brilliant purple throat of the male Lucifer Hummingbird. Furthermore, the bird’s name would have been spelled “Lucifer’s” if it were referring to a possessive entity. However, the word “lucifer” could still be misconstrued and possibly found offensive by some.

specimens from around the world. Back in the day, he was the world's leading ornithological taxonomist. He described 193 new species of birds from around the world, including the Philadelphia Vireo, the only species he personally collected. He was a museum man, not a field naturalist; it is unlikely that he ever saw in the wild any of the species that were named after him. However, Cassin was highly respected by his explorer-colleagues, and they often named new discoveries after him.

Cassin appeared to love his job but apparently not his paycheck. He once groused (pardon the pun) that naming birds would be a more enjoyable endeavor if he didn't have to be so concerned about putting food on the table. Cassin's plans to issue several books on western birds were interrupted by the Civil War where he served in the Union Army and was held in the infamous Libby Prison in Richmond, Virginia after being captured by the Confederates.

Meyers notes that, like so many early naturalists, Cassin sacrificed much for his passion, and he eventually died in 1869 at age 55, after knowingly handling museum bird skins preserved with arsenic for two decades. So, next time you see a Cassin's Kingbird, give a nod to John Cassin.

*Retired biologist Tom Gatz has been a MAS member since 1981.*

1. Myers, S. *The Bird Name Book – A History of English Bird Names*,

Princeton Univ. Press, 2022.

2. Foley, G. & Rutter, J. (Aug. 12, 2020). "What Confederate Statues and Some American Bird Names Have in Common", *The Washington Post*.

3. Crotty, J. (8 Sep 2020) "What are the Costs of Changing Bird Names?", *10,000 Birds*.

4. Hannemann, E., "Lucifer Hummingbird: What's in a name?", *Birds and Blooms*, (4 Apr 2022).



Cassin's Sparrow. Photo by Jim Burns.



Cassin's Kingbird. Photo by Jim Burns.



Cassin's Vireo. Photo by Jim Burns.



# MCMICKEN DAM CONSERVATION AREA: HABITAT WORTH FIGHTING FOR

BY ANTHONY ROBINSON

As the urban area expands, it is vital that we continue setting aside natural areas, including wildlife corridors, to prevent habitat fragmentation and the loss of biodiversity.

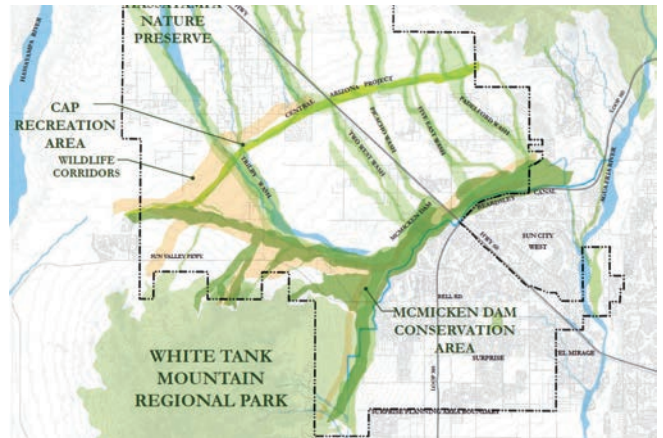
The people of the Phoenix metro area have set aside a fairly substantial amount of land in regional parks, preserves, and wildlife areas. Together with nearby federally and state managed lands, this action maintains at least some of the abundance of native species that existed before European settlement.

Surprise grew from 1,547 residents in 1960 to about 123,000 in 2015. It's projected to reach 750,000 upon build-out of the City's Plan. When I joined the City's Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission in June, 2022, I was happy to see that both the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan and General Plan from 2015 specified two conservation areas, one of which, the McMicken Dam Conservation Area (MDCA), included bajadas, floodplains, and a channel behind McMicken Dam (see map above).

Unfortunately, the area is being trashed by illegal offroaders, dumping, and trespass cattle, particularly north of Sun Valley Parkway to Grand Ave. It is fenced with signs, but the fences are cut as fast as they are repaired. Unless this land is protected, it will be further degraded and possibly rezoned for development as Surprise continues to expand.



Sagebrush Sparrow *Artemisiospiza nevadensis*.  
Photo by Anthony Robinson.



The Surprise Planning Area includes portions proposed for the McMicken Dam Conservation Area.

The MDCA would largely lie on property owned by Maricopa County Flood Control District (MCFCD) which owns McMicken Dam and land west of the dam. The Maricopa Trail roughly borders the western portion of that property. Creation of the MDCA will require an agreement between the county, city, and MCFCD. If nearby State Trust Land is incorporated, the State Land Department would require an additional agreement.

McMicken Dam was constructed by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 1954 to protect Luke Air Force Base, the Litchfield Park Naval Air Facility, and agricultural land in the area from flooding. The dam diverts drainage from the northeastern White Tank Mountains, e.g., Willow and Ford Canyons and the south side of the Hieroglyphic Mountains (Tribly Wash), through the outfall channel to the Agua Fria. The channel supports typical Sonoran Desert wash vegetation. Occasionally large pools form after substantial rains; in August, 2022 a pool about 0.9 miles long and 30 yards wide north of Sun Valley Parkway, attracted wading birds, shorebirds, and waterfowl such as White-faced Ibis, and Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs. The pond took five months to dry out.

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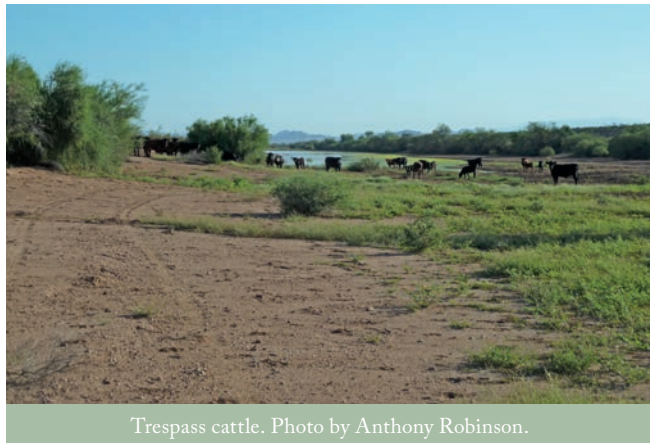
The MDCA contains a variety of vegetative communities: creosote flats, mixed shrub, scattered grasses and cacti. Shallow washes with shrubs, mesquite, palo verde, and ironwood trees support a diversity of wildlife. In the year since I began birding the area in February 2022, I've documented 100 species, including seven which are watch-listed. The network of washes from the White Tanks and Hieroglyphic Mountains brings in coyotes, jackrabbits, ground squirrels, and javelina.

The MCDA holds great potential as valuable habitat and a wildlife corridor. MAS board members toured the area and attended the meeting of the City of Surprise's Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission last January to voice their support. Sadly, as of early 2023, no progress has been made to establish the MDCA. Designating it a Conservation Area is the first step in protecting it for plants, animals and people.

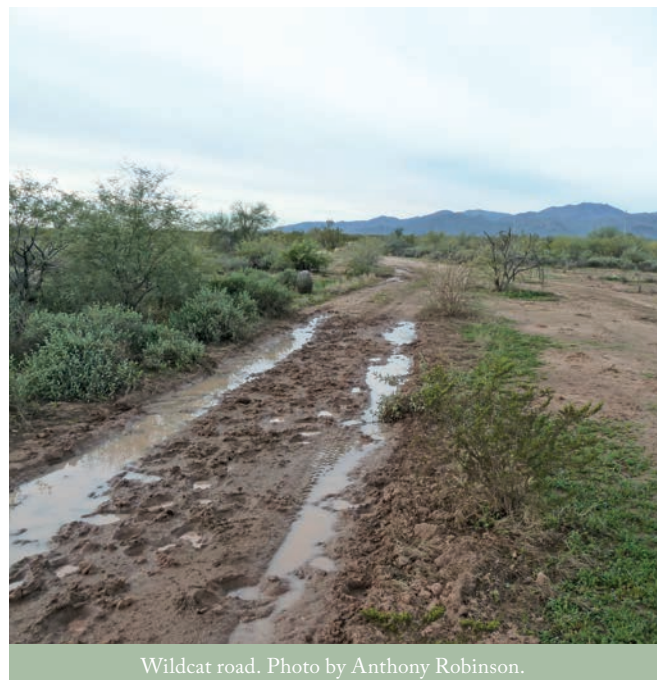
*Anthony Robinson is a retired AGFD fish biologist and a Surprise Parks and Recreation Advisory Commissioner.*  
atrobinson1520@gmail.com



Emily Thomas, Anthony Robinson, Loren Hupe and Trinity Moll visit the McMicken Dam Conservation Area 8 January 2023. Photo by Laurie Nessel.



Trespass cattle. Photo by Anthony Robinson.



Wildcat road. Photo by Anthony Robinson.

## How You Can Help

**Bird There:** Get familiar with the area. There are three Maricopa Trail trailheads - Sun Valley Trailhead at the center, Tribly Trailhead from the north, and Mule Deer Trailhead from the south in White Tank Mountains Regional Park.

**Speak Up:** Let our elected officials at Maricopa County and the City of Surprise know that you support the creation of the MDCA. County residents can contact the Maricopa Board of Supervisors ([maricopa.gov/224/Board-of-Supervisors](http://maricopa.gov/224/Board-of-Supervisors)), or attend a board meeting. Surprise residents can also contact the Surprise City Council ([www.surpriseaz.gov/732/City Council](http://www.surpriseaz.gov/732/City-Council)), or attend a City Council or Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission Meeting when the agenda raises this topic.

**Volunteer:** For a clean-up of the area, dates TBD.

Thanks in advance for your help!

Pools formed behind McMicken Dam, August 2022. Photo by Anthony Robinson.





# BIRDS OF ARIZONA

## BY RICHARD CACHOR TAYLOR

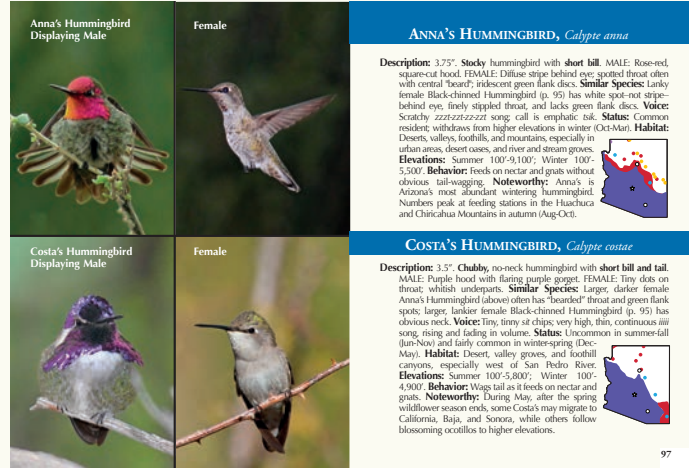
Paperback, \$26.95, 494 pages, 2022  
 Reviewed by Jelena Grbic

According to the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the number of bird species in Arizona stands at 534 species, the most for a state without a coast, which accounts for almost half of the birds in North America. That's an astonishing amount for a non-expert (or perhaps even an expert!) to identify. Thankfully, there are field guides. I wanted to put Richard "Rick" Cachor Taylor's new field guide - *Birds of Arizona* - to the test by comparing it to Stan Tekiela's *Birds of Arizona* (2003), Rick Wright's *ABA Guide to Birds of Arizona* (2016), David Sibley's *Birds of Western North America* (2016), and Kenn Kaufman's *Birds of North America* (2005).

Hiking 500 miles each summer for eight years studying Elegant Trogons (see page 23) in the '70's and '80's gave Taylor expertise in the birds and habitat of the region. In 1980 he founded Borderland Tours, offering ecotrips throughout the world. He has authored books including *Trogons of the Arizona Borderlands* (1994) (see CW Summer 2020 pp.6-7) and *Birds of Southeastern Arizona* (2010).

He credits the pandemic for both the explosion in eBird and AZ/NM bird chat3 data, and the time to analyze it, as well as ABA and U of A data, to create the most current bird list and range maps. The book was written as a handbook with quick access to dates and status of desirable species, and to significant out-of-range vagrant and migrant occurrences by season that even a eBirder could use. He describes over 520 species and sub-species, including the Mexican strays, with 488 full write ups. Both Wright and Tekiela's Arizona guides have fewer species, 323 and 151 respectively, choosing to focus on the more commonly occurring birds (Tekiela includes almost no shorebirds!) Though packed with information, Taylor's guide is smaller than the others and easy to take in the field. I tested the claim that it fits into cargo pant pockets... it does indeed but is a little too bulky for my taste.

There are useful habitat and anatomy descriptions in the front of the book. I like how Taylor and Kaufman color code by families/distinct genera to help find species quickly. As with most guides, Taylor uses AOU taxonomy but also puts similar looking species together for easier comparison. Tekiela orders species by color, more suited for the casual birder. The left pages in Taylor's guide have photographs of several species, both male and female, with descriptions on the facing pages. Several species such as California Condor and, of course, Elegant Trogon, have their own spread. There is ample text accompanying each species with distinguishing traits in bold for



quick reference including: general description, length, similar species, voice, status, habitat, elevations (!), behavior, and other noteworthy points. This is much more detail than that found in the North American guides by Sibley and Kaufman.

What I miss in Taylor's guide is having prominent field marks pointed out with lines or text right next to those features, as in Sibley and Kaufman. Those two guides also show more plumages (especially Sibley's), and eliminate distracting backgrounds. Overall, for Arizona-only guides, I think Taylor's takes the cake. It's well-organized, has range maps (Wright's doesn't), is easy to carry, and the photos are large and clear. It is approachable for beginners and has enough detail to satisfy more seasoned birders. It's a fine compliment to Taylor's other books and other field guides generally; worthy of any birder's bookshelf, if not cargo pants.

Hear Rick's interesting interview on "Looking at Birds" podcast #29 talking about Trogons and Quetzals, hummingbirds, the making of *Birds of Arizona* and more from his home in the eastern foothills of the Chiricahuas. See page 20.

*Jelena (Ye-lunah) Grbic is MAS's secretary. Originally from Bosnia and raised in Canada, she received an undergrad in Environmental Science at McGill University and a Master's in GIS at Toronto Metropolitan University. Since moving here a year ago, she has immersed herself in the wonders of Arizona birding.*

<sup>1</sup>[www.azgfd.com/wildlife/nongamemanagement/nongamebirds/](http://www.azgfd.com/wildlife/nongamemanagement/nongamebirds/)  
<sup>2</sup>[www.aba.org/aba-checklist/](http://www.aba.org/aba-checklist/)  
<sup>3</sup>[aznmbirds@list.arizona.edu](mailto:aznmbirds@list.arizona.edu)

# IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BIRDS BY LYNDIE MASON WARNER

Paperback, 96 pages, \$19.99

Reviewed by Mark Horlings

Bird books tend to be purposeful, with the purpose either to find birds, (see *Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County*), to identify species, (see Sibley), or to explore bird migration or biology (see *A Season on the Wind* by Kenn Kauffman). Lyndie Mason Warner's *It's All About the Birds* is something else again - her invitation to share "The Adventures of an Arizona Birder." Her descriptions of those adventures and particularly her photographs make it an invitation worth accepting.

Ms. Warner weaves attractive illustrations through a charming text, but as its best feature, the book offers many compelling, artfully rendered photographs. A resting Turkey Vulture, back hunched, staring, dares you to enter its gloomy domain. Orioles, quail, and phoebes display flanges identifying them as fledglings, and a fledgling Great-tailed Grackle sports white puffs of feathers above its head.

The book is short, fewer than 100 pages, with sections divided into the four seasons, and the seasons further divided by topic or adventure. Topics range from woodpeckers in winter to classical myths about kingfishers. The adventures include a 4-day 1400-mile drive through Canyon Country, seeking nine target birds and finding eight of them.

Her emphasis is mostly personal. Photo captions describe where and how a bird was found, and whether it appeared once or qualifies as a neighborhood friend. Birding California becomes a "sentimental journey home" for the author, a native of Sunnyside. Bird behavior gets routinely anthropomorphized. Thus, predation becomes a tale of good and evil, and fledglings appear "grumpy."

*It's All About the Birds* won't suit everybody. But it offers readers a close look at the fun birds provide -



## It's All About the Birds

THE ADVENTURES OF AN ARIZONA BIRDER  
BY LYNDIE MASON WARNER

Short Stories, Fun Facts and Amusing Anecdotes From The Avian World

combining personal narrative, science, and beautiful photos. If you know someone who is just starting out, or wish to compare your own experiences birding to another enthusiastic amateur's, this might be just the book for you.

Available at White Mountain Nature Center, Pinetop; Jay's Bird Barn, Prescott; and Immortal Trees Bookshop, Avondale.

*Mark Horlings is MAS's field trip chair.*



# FLASH CARDS: LEARN THE BIRDS BEFORE YOU TRAVEL

By Duane Morse

How do you prepare to identify birds for a new, exotic birding trip? Do you pour over a field guide, download a Bird Pack of the region from the Merlin app, or leave it all to your hired guide? For some, old-fashioned flash cards are the most effective learning tool. Being prepared means you won't spend so much time asking the guide to identify everything, especially something only you were lucky enough to see. I've often seen others on a trip with home-made flash cards, and the rest, seeing our cards, wish they had made them as well.

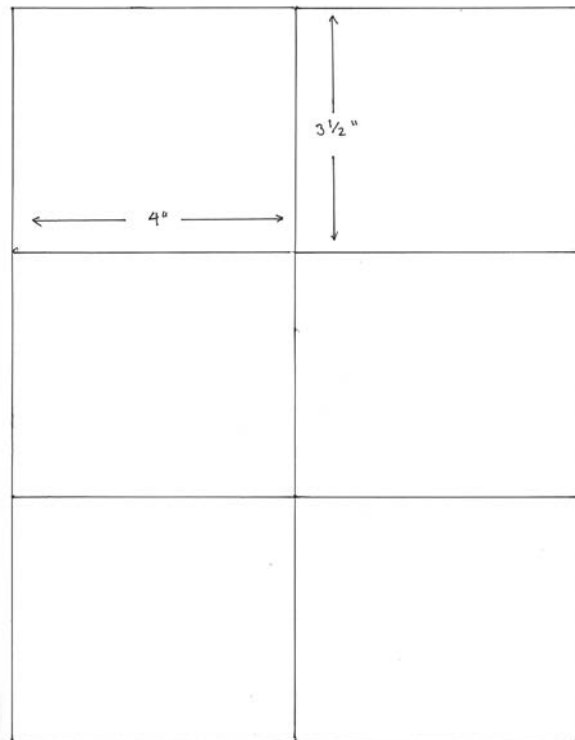
First I create a template using Open Office, though most word processors will work. I set up a single page with a table having two columns and three rows, all with fixed dimensions. There are online tutorials if you need help with this. Save this file as your template.

Initially I printed bird images on regular printer paper and then taped the photos to index cards, but this takes additional time and material and the flash cards were still flimsy. Now I print on card stock. Check your manual to make sure your printer supports card stock and you've adjusted the settings; or use a print shop.

I typically get the bird images I want from eBird which allows one-time download of images for personal use. I copy and paste a photo from the main page of that species into a cell of the table. When I have filled in the table, I print the page in color, cut out the cards, and on the back write the name, and perhaps other keys like habitat, similar species, Latin name, etc. I then delete the images on the page and start over with a new set of birds.

If your trip checklist uses IOC names, which eBird doesn't always recognize, you have to enter the Latin name; and then write both IOC and Clements taxonomy (eBird) name on the back of the card. If eBird doesn't recognize the bird as a separate species, try a different source for the picture such

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Card Stock Template

as Wikipedia, which is public domain or creative commons.

To print more than one image in a cell, e.g., for sexually dimorphic species or for both a flight and a perched shot of certain raptors, I insert one picture in a cell, reduce its dimensions, move it to the upper left corner, then insert the other picture, moving it to the lower right, then change the dimensions so both images are visible in the same cell. I prefer putting two images in a single cell, but you may want to make separate flash cards. Some species require multiple cards - those with many subspecies, e.g., Red-tailed Hawk, or different appearances over multiple years, e.g., gulls.

I separate the cards into three groups: easy-to-recognize birds, e.g., Red-headed Barbet, not-so-easy birds, e.g., some finches, and next-to-impossible birds - just about any Cisticola. A couple months before a trip, I start memorizing the easy birds and then move on to the second group. If I have time, I try the hard birds, knowing that I will very likely have to rely on the guide to identify those for me, though by studying the cards I will at least be able to spell the name properly.

Once I have successively identified a bird by its picture multiple times, I set the card aside to make room for new cards, but I periodically revisit the “old” cards to verify I still recognize the bird; about 10% of the time I don't, so the card goes back in the active set. I use the long plane flights and hours in airports to do a final brush up.

After the trip, I save the cards in alphabetical order to use on subsequent trips with some of the same birds. If they aren't encountered regularly, it's easy to forget them, but having learned the bird once, relearning goes fairly quickly. Except for cisticolas.

*Duane Morse is a retired computer programmer who lives near South Mountain Park with his wife and four spoiled rescue dogs.*



Red-headed Barbet, male and female – easy to recognize



Trilling Cisticola – good luck memorizing this one!



# GAMBEL'S QUAIL CHICKS – HARBINGERS OF SPRING

Text and Photos by Tom Mangelsdorf

Distinctive, elegant, iconic – words you can easily apply to the adult Gambel's Quail of the Sonoran Desert. Adorable, lovable, and just plain cute are words that describe their chicks. Springtime in the desert is when you'll begin to see the male and female adults ushering their new family of chicks across roads, through washes and across your backyards.

Named in honor of William Gambel, a 19th-century naturalist and explorer of the southwest, Gambel's Quail range throughout most of the southwestern states with an abundant presence here in Maricopa County. Identifying this species is easy – just look for their unique topknot. They will typically be spotted on the ground scurrying through the underbrush, although if startled, they will quickly take flight to avoid danger.

Quail nests are usually found in shaded areas among a few leaves and scraps of branches, or even in a planter box on your porch. A typical nest has about 10-12 eggs. When they hatch, all of the new chicks poke through their shells nearly simultaneously and precocious - ready to hit the ground running. The tiny chicks cluster around their parents who carefully watch over them as they quickly learn to eat and forage on their own.

But, like everything else in the desert, life for the little chicks can be hazardous. Predators like snakes, coyotes and birds of



Male (left) and female adult Gambel's Quail.

prey will quickly snatch wayward youngsters – one reason why these quail produce such large broods. Yet, despite the desert's harsh environment, the Gambel's Quail population has remained fairly stable for several decades. However, human development and continuing loss of habitat in addition to climate change remain persistent risks to their future.

So, as the spring days grow longer and the desert heat begins to return, keep an eye out for these beautiful avian families strutting through the desert. Oh, and if you're planning to visit Hawaii's big island, you just might spot a Gambel's Quail on the slopes of the Mauna Kea volcano. They were released by the Hawaii Division of Fish and Game for several years during the mid-twentieth century.

*Tom Mangelsdorf is a 30-year resident of Scottsdale who enjoys photographing all aspects of the Sonoran Desert. Since 2012, he has concentrated on the beauty of the area's bird life.*



# LOOKING AT BIRDS VIA PODCAST

By Kathe Anderson



I don't listen to many podcasts, and I've never longed to be a guest on a podcast. So I surprised myself by offering an interview for "Looking at Birds." I was even more surprised when the host, who only goes by "Chris," accepted my offer.

The upside included a trip to Tohono Chul park, a lovely venue off Ina Road in north Tucson, with a bistro and art galleries, as well as a variety of gardens and sculptures. Chris likes to record there, with birds chattering in the background. I invited two birding buddies along who were promised lunch, so I'd have lively company for the trip. The downside was that I could screw up badly or it would be too boring to air. But with friends, birds and lunch, the time would not be wasted.

Chris sent me his standard questions in advance and followed up with a Zoom chat to get acquainted. I chose "my" bird, brushed up on its remarkable characteristics, and felt ready for this.

So last July, Chris arrived with a wagon full of sound equipment, including noise reduction for the deafening cicadas. He then set up in the shade of the somewhat secluded Performance Garden. He posted a sign about what we were up to, although no curious folks stopped by. After a few tests and adjustments, we launched in.

Chris introduces his podcast as being "about birds, birding, and those who love both." He asks how the guest started birding and what birding experience was most memorable. Then he asks about the guest's chosen species: mine was a Rock Pigeon. No, that's not a bird I particularly like, but it's a fascinating species that is much maligned. I want more folks to know that pigeons are highly variable in plumage, and are important to humans: they are eaten all over the world, have been critical to saving lives in wartime and ocean rescues, and are smart and trainable to our advantage.

True to the script that Chris had outlined, the interview flowed like a natural conversation. The time sped by. My friends had an equally enjoyable time. They happened to be

the only participants in the garden's birdwalk that day and had a "private" tour with a very friendly and knowledgeable leader. They showed me the active Bell's Vireo nest they had discovered.

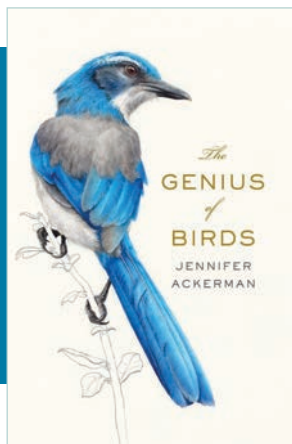
"Try new things" is a mantra for staying young. Being a podcast guest was certainly a new thing for me and it was a treat on many levels. I've even done it again, on a topic mentioned in my first interview - birds' eggs. Find "Looking at Birds" on your favorite podcast app, then "like, comment and subscribe" to help this informative and entertaining show flourish. You can listen to some familiar regional guests including Jenny McFarland from Tucson Audubon Society on Elf Owls and Lesser Goldfinch, and Rick Taylor (see p.15) on the 45th anniversary of his sighting of the first Eared Quetzal in North America. My first episode is #27; my second is yet to air.

Chris is always looking for podcast guests. If you or someone you know has something to share with birders of any level, contact Chris through his podcasts or [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net). The passion of birding is even better when it's shared; it's fun and helps you stay young!

Share your knowledge. It's a way to achieve  
immortality. -Dalai Lama

*Kathe Anderson is a full-time bird enthusiast. She teaches classes and workshops, surveys as a community scientist, raises funds, writes articles about birds and birding and leads over 60 field trips a year.*





# READING IS FOR THE BIRDS!

By Suzanne Crabb

If you love everything about birds, as I do, you most likely enjoy reading and learning as much as you can about them. Here is a short list of interesting books for you to explore.

New York Times bestseller *The Genius of Birds*, 2016, by Jennifer Ackerman highlights the complex social structures of avian society. She documents how birds are capable of abstract thinking, problem solving, sharing and communication with humans. It is fascinating and informative. Ackerman also authored *The Bird Way: A New Look at How Birds Talk, Work, Play, Parent, and Think* - which is next on my reading list.

*The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature*, 2017, by ornithologist J. Drew Lanham was the winner of the Southern Book Prize. Lanham chronicles growing up on a family homestead dating back to slavery, and fitting into a predominantly white field as a black ornithologist. It is insightful and moving.

*Kingbird Highway: The Story of a Natural Obsession That Got a Little Out of Hand*, 2006, by Kenn Kaufman is a classic birding book. Student council president Kauffman drops out

of high school and hitchhikes across America on a quest to set a record for the most North American species seen in a year. The places and the birding community he portrays, including our own Bob and Janet Witzeman, make this a must read for any birding enthusiast.

Two more books on my "to read" list include *What It's Like to be a Bird*, 2020, by David Allen Sibley and *How to be a Bad Birdwatcher*, 2006, by Simon Barnes. Sibley's book answers frequently asked questions about common birds written in nontechnical language. It appeals to young and old alike. *Bad Birdwatcher* takes a more casual approach to birding and encourages the reader to lay down the bird list and just enjoy birds by noting their presence and listening to their singing.

Perhaps you have a reading list or book review you'd like to share with our readers! Send them to the editor or post them on our Facebook page.

*Suzanne Crabb is a member of MAS and past MAS Publicity Chair.*

The Thrasher Spot Field Trip 14 January  
Images by Tom Cheknis



LeConte's Thrasher



Long-billed Curlew



*Flight of the Ringed Kingfisher*  
*Procreate limocut*

## NATURE THROUGH THE ARTIST'S EYE: LYNDIE MASON WARNER

Lyndie Mason Warner began photography at a young age, documenting family vacations and adventures. Raised in Sunnyvale, CA, her early career was as an administrative assistant, then corporate manager. In 1983, when a company buyout eliminated her job, she enrolled in the Graphic Design program at UC - Santa Cruz.

Ten years later, Lyndie and her husband sold almost all they owned and sailed along the west coast of the US and Mexico for a year with their cat, BC. They traded in their 27' Pacific Seacraft for a 28' Class C motor home and traveled the country for another year before landing in San Antonio, TX. There, her design career touched on all aspects of photography, including

studio work and film processing.

After moving to Arizona in 2000 she opened her design firm. Over the last decade, she has focused on bird photography and nature writing and dabbled in digital art. She crops her photos sparingly, allowing the viewer a glimpse of a bird's life in the context of its habitat. This led to a blog/gallery on LadyBirder.com. In 2022, she published a book of her images and experiences - *It's All About the Birds: The Adventures of an Arizona Birder* (reviewed on p. 16.)

Lyndie, her husband, Paul, and their dog, Sadi, split their time between Buckeye and the White Mountains, where she writes, paints and photographs birds as often as possible. @lyndiebirds; Lyndie Warner on Facebook.



*Juvenile White-crowned Sparrow in Fall White Mountains, AZ*

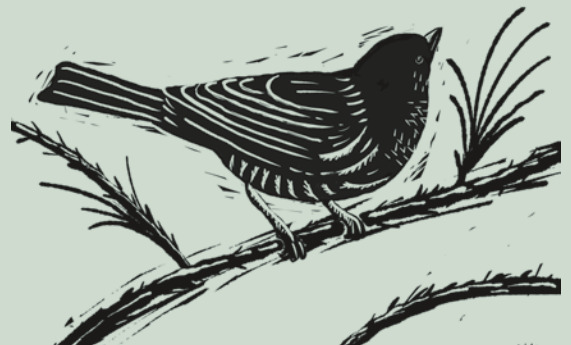




*Elegant Trogon, Madera Canyon, AZ*



*Plumbeous Vireo in Spring, White Mountains, AZ*



*Junco, Procreate linocut*



## Maricopa Audubon Society

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1. National Audubon Society - For dual membership in NAS and MAS call (844) 428-3826 and ask to be assigned to MAS chapter B00. You will get The Cactus Wren•dition as a courtesy. To be guaranteed a subscription, please consider joining MAS as a Friend.

2. Maricopa Audubon Society Friend dues go directly to MAS and support our mission. Friends are guaranteed a print subscription to The Cactus Wren•dition, and discounts on books and merchandise. Dues are \$10/year student/youth, \$20/ year individual. MAS is a non-profit 501(c)(3). All dues above \$20 are tax deductible.

You can join at a monthly meeting; online at [maricopaaudubon.org/join](http://maricopaaudubon.org/join); or send your name, address, phone or email, and a check payable to Maricopa Audubon Society to the MAS Treasurer (right). Effective April 1, 2023, all Friends memberships will renew annually each year on April 1st. Subscriptions are pro-rated.

### SUBMISSIONS

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### OPINIONS

The opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of NAS or MAS.

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## MARICOPA AUDUBON BOARD

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602 574-4710  
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[jelena.j.grbic@gmail.com](mailto:jelena.j.grbic@gmail.com)

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[vicki.hire@gmail.com](mailto:vicki.hire@gmail.com)

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[trinitymoll@gmail.com](mailto:trinitymoll@gmail.com)

### EDUCATION

**Jason Struthers DVM**  
602 585-1492  
[jds.dvm@gmail.com](mailto:jds.dvm@gmail.com)

### EDITOR

**Laurie Nessel**  
602 391-4303  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

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