



# the Cactus Wren·dition



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WINTER – 2020



Burrowing Owl  
by Shirley Ramaley



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Mark W. Larson

In September we began our new season, as we always do, with a meeting of the membership, but this was not a usual meeting. Instead, we met remotely over the Internet, which was a first for the Maricopa Audubon Society. To stay safe we will do that again, but not without misgivings. To share our mission and our message with you in person cannot be replaced entirely by technology. I miss the fellowship of our usual meetings. I miss your reports about interesting encounters with birds and other natural things and I miss connecting with old friends and making new ones. And, I miss learning new things from the speakers that bring us informative programs about their research, their travels, and their investigations into the wonders of Nature.

There will be an evening in the not-too-distant future when we can resume meeting in person. In the meantime, please continue to stay safe, always guarding your loved ones, and continue to find ways to connect with the natural world. In the last months I have fielded numerous questions about birds, providing facts and dispelling misinformation. Please remember that my electronic door is always open to you, the members of Maricopa Audubon.

During this pandemic we have slowed, but not halted, our efforts to conserve the environmental treasures of Arizona. Through the work of our Vice President, Robin Silver, MD, we are pushing the USDA Coronado National Forest to follow-through on their commitments to remove cabins and other structures from Critical Habitat for the Endangered Mount Graham Red Squirrel in the Pinaleno Mountains. In addition, we were planning to conduct surveys this summer for threatened Western Yellow-billed Cuckoos along the Verde River in Maricopa County until those plans were forestalled by the pandemic. Next spring we will be looking for volunteers to help conduct those surveys during the 2021 breeding season.

The MAS Field Trip Chairman, Larry Langstaff, is working with our field trip leaders to implement a new concept that suits our current situation. It is called the POD field trip and involves a field trip leader and no more than five MAS members birding local sites as a way for you to continue to connect with the natural world in this difficult time. My thanks go to longtime friend and Salem (Oregon) Audubon Society Field Trip Chairwoman Cynthia Donald for this helpful idea.

In the absence of in-person meetings and field trips, we are continuing to produce our first-class publication, The Cactus-Wren•dition. Our hard-working, talented editor and poet laureate David Chorlton is always seeking informative, illustrated articles that will be of interest to you. I suggest that you, as members of MAS, reach out to David to give him feedback on his work and that of the Wren•dition contributors.

As of this writing, we have some openings on the MAS Board of Directors. Please let me know if you are interested in serving on our Board.

Until we can again meet in person, I urge you to stay safe and continue to find ways to connect with Arizona's precious natural world. 🐦

*Mark W. Larson*  
President

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



David Chorlton

First of all, thanks to new and renewing members who responded to our membership call last time around. I hope you enjoy the *Wren•dition* and in the absence of in-person meetings take advantage of the Zoom-enabled events we have scheduled, so you can still hear guest speakers in your homes. Maybe the cooler months will draw many of you out onto local trails. Go carefully, and good luck for possible sightings.

Birding close to home, even at home, can be fascinating around Phoenix. Gail Cochrane reports in this issue on South Mountain Park, Paul Halesworth tells us about the Screech Owls and other species drawn to his back yard, and Tom Gatz writes about Barn Swallows in the city. Even when travel is problematic, we find beauty in familiar birds and take none of them for granted as we study our immediate surroundings.

This is a year with more than its share of depressing news, much of it relating to wildlife, and anyone who cares will surely feel the weight of collective misfortune. Looking ahead, I think about nature's powers of regeneration. This has to begin with creating the right conditions for repair work on our planet, but with the pressure from people worldwide comes a clear call to action. Along with Maricopa Audubon Society's efforts on conservation issues, we can each contribute as individuals by stressing our concerns in contacting elected officials and paying attention to small actions we can take at home to make good conditions for the birds.

Most of the creative people currently lauded on television are active in popular culture, where bright lights often shine to create spectacular effects around the good social work they do. There are many who labor in quieter disciplines from literature to the visual arts, and whose work is just as vital, if less celebrated. Sharon Field appears in this issue as an artist with an eye for detail and a devotion to nature. Vicki Hire interviewed her in our previous issue about her firefighting life during Australia's terrible experiences. She represents the active and contemplative sides of our helping the planet when and how we can, and her example suggests we take an interest in the full range of creativity currently addressing climate and related issues.

For now, best wishes looking ahead to the holiday season. May we all find cause for celebration— 🐦

David Chorlton  
Editor

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**amazon**smile

Maricopa Audubon Society is now registered on Amazon as a charitable organization. Go to the MAS Facebook page for details or use the following AmazonSmile link for Maricopa Audubon Society: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/86-6040458>

Log onto your Amazon account and a percentage of your purchase will go to MAS!

## Committees/Support

**Arizona Audubon Council Rep**  
Position Open

**Bookstore**  
Sochetra Ly  
503 860-0370

**Poet Laureate**  
David Chorlton  
480 705-3227

**Maricopa Audubon Website**  
<http://www.maricopaaudubon.org>  
Be sure to check it. You never know what you'll find!

**The Earth has received the embrace of the sun and we shall see the results of that love.**

*Sitting Bull*

## 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.

### Sign up for the e-newsletter!



To receive updates and supplements to *The Cactus Wren•dition*, sign up for the monthly (September to May) e-newsletter. No membership required. It includes meeting and field trip reminders, special events, and citizen science projects.

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

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



# Meetings...

All member meetings are by Zoom until further notice. Please visit our webpage or subscribe to our eNews (laurienessel@gmail.com) for the Zoom link.



Image: The Red-fronted Macaw is one of two species of endemic macaws in Bolivia and one of the most beautiful members of the genus Ara. Photo by Rich C. Hoyer

## TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3, 2020

### Birds of Bolivia with Rich C. Hoyer

Few birders think of Bolivia when considering an international birding trip, but that may only be because the country does a poor job in promoting itself as a birding destination. Spectacularly diverse in ecosystems, topography, wildlife, and cultures, this country has the largest bird list for any landlocked country in the world, despite being only about the size as the Four Corners states together. Were it to regain a bit of its former Pacific coastline, it would have the largest bird list of any country in the world and should be one of the world's top birding destinations, especially now that it has its own field guide. Rich Hoyer began exploring Bolivia in 2000 as a budding professional leader. Two decades and many tours later, he continues to be enthralled by this fascinating country.

*Rich Hoyer's first job after obtaining a B.S. in Zoology and a B.A. in German at Oregon State University in 1994 was conducting point count surveys of birds in the southeastern Arizona sky islands for a US Forest Service study. But by then he already knew that he wanted to lead tours for a career, and in summer 1996 he got his first job as a guide on St. Paul Island in Alaska. He then lived in Arizona for the next twenty three years while leading birding and natural history tours throughout the Neotropics. He lives in Eugene, in his home state of Oregon. He hopes to continue leading tours for WINGS when then current virus pandemic clears from the air.*



## TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2020

### Kevin McGraw: Backyard Bird Feeding

“Backyard bird feeding is now more than a billion-dollar industry nationwide, and with this activity come many benefits, such as drawing attractive small birds to our yards and provisioning them with valued resources. However, there may be dark sides to bird feeding, and this could include the spread of disease at our feeders that attract dense populations of avian visitors. Here I will discuss the first field experiment of its kind to investigate the extent to which routine bird-feeder cleaning can impact disease severity and spread in a common feeder-visiting passerine (the House Finch).”

*Kevin McGraw is Professor and Associate Director for Facilities in the School of Life Sciences at Arizona State University. He came to ASU in 2004 and leads a research team that investigates two main areas – the evolution of exaggerated traits in animals and urban behavioral ecology. His group's primary foci have been on the control and function of ornate colors of birds (especially finches and hummingbirds), and how birds acclimate and adapt to the many ways in which humans modify city environments. Students in his lab have also studied elaborate coloration in animals such as chameleons, butterflies, and jumping spiders. He has mentored many students in research during his fifteen years at ASU, including seven post-doctoral researchers, eight PhD graduates, two current PhD students, and over 300 undergraduates.*

## JANUARY 5, 2021

### Colleen Patrick-Goudreau: How Your Diet Can Help the Environment

“The proclamation to change the world is as old as our awareness that humans are messing things up. The problem is that we're asking the wrong thing of people. It's not that we CAN change the world. We're already doing that. We're changing the world in ways that have harmful and often irreversible effects for ourselves and the billions of other life forms with whom we share this planet. It's not the world

we need to change. It's ourselves. It's our own habits. I think this idea is both empowering and frightening to people. It's empowering because it means that we are in control. And it's frightening because it means that we are in control.”



*Join bestselling author and podcaster Colleen Patrick-Goudreau for practical ways we can start changing the world for the better. A recognized expert and thought leader on the culinary, social, ethical, and practical aspects of living vegan, she has authored seven bestselling books. She is an acclaimed speaker and host of the Food for Thought and Animalogy podcasts. She co-founded East Bay Animal PAC to work with government officials on animal issues in the San Francisco Bay Area.*

## FIELD TRIPS

Due to the ongoing coronavirus situation we have decided to postpone resuming any planned field trips. On page 5 of the Fall 2020 Wren•dition you can find a few suggestions for local locations where you might plan a safety-conscious visit.

## Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County, Arizona

This is the definitive guide to birding around Phoenix, by Janet Witzeman, Troy Corman, Tommy Debardeleben and Laurie Nessel. The first edition was published in 1972 by Janet Witzeman, Eleanor Radke and Bix Demaree and revised in 1997.

*Proceeds from the sale of this publication support the conservation efforts of Maricopa Audubon Society.*

228 pages, spiralbound 5-13/4" X 8-1/2" fieldguide format. 82 full color photos, 93 graphs, 10 maps. The guide is available for \$26.95 through the following outlets locally. (A full statewide list is at <https://www.maricopaudubon.org/birds-of-phoenix-1> )

**Arizona Highways**

2039 W. Lewis Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85009  
(602) 712-2200

**Audubon Arizona Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center**

3131 S. Central Ave.  
Phoenix, AZ 85040  
(602) 468-6470

**Boyce Thompson Arboretum**

37615 E. US Highway 60  
Superior, AZ 85173  
(520) 689-2811



**Buteo Books & ABA Sales (Available Online)**

(800) 728-2460  
customerservice@buteobooks.com

**Desert Botanical Garden**

1201 N. Galvin Parkway  
Phoenix, AZ 85008  
(480) 941-1225

**Changing Hands Bookstore Tempe**

6428 S. McClintock Dr.  
Tempe, AZ 85283  
(480) 730-0205

**Changing Hands Bookstore Phoenix**

300 W. Camelback Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85013  
(602) 274-0067

**North Phoenix Mountain Park**

10608 N. 7th Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85020  
(602) 262-7901

**Pueblo Grande Museum**

4619 E. Washington Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85034  
(602) 495-0901

**South Mountain Environmental Education Center**

10409 S. Central Avenue  
Phoenix, AZ 85042  
(623) 334-7880

**Superstition Mountain Museum**

4087 N. Apache Trail  
Apache Junction, AZ 85119  
(480) 983-4888

**Tovrea Castle**

5025 E. Van Buren Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85008  
(602) 256-3221

(See President's Message for mention of planned POD field trips.)

## Christmas Bird Count

We wish we could have listed information for Christmas Bird Counts in Arizona, as usual. The following is from the National Audubon Guidelines. For updated information on counts, please consult the MAS website or go to Arizona Field Ornithologists at <http://azfo.org/>

**Guidelines for the 121st Audubon Christmas Bird Count**

*Audubon will fully support any compiler who decides to cancel their count for this year. If a compiler would like to proceed with the CBC, they must abide by the guidelines below.*

Dear CBC Compilers,

First and foremost, we hope this message finds you and your loved ones well. We are living through unprecedented times, but the most important things are still those we choose to spend our time with.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, this year's Christmas Bird Count will require a few changes if your count is to take place at all. The two options for Christmas Bird Count compilers are as follows:

**Option 1:** Run a COVID-19 safe and socially distanced CBC, if local rules allow. [Must wait until November 15 at the earliest to choose this option in order to better understand status of COVID outbreak in your region during the CBC.]

**Option 2:** If option 1 is not possible, cancel this season's CBC for your location.

## Annual Report for Fiscal Year Ending May 31, 2020

by Vicki Hire, Treasurer

**Income**

Audubon	6,238
Birds of Phx & Maricopa Co.	2,264
Donations	2,248
Friends memberships	2,045
Book Table sales	674
Frys Community Rewards	355
Merchandise sales	251
Big Sit	110
Interest	23

**Total Income** **\$14,208**

**Expenses**

The Cactus Wren*dition	16,322
Insurance	2,360
National Convention	2,233
Meeting Rooms	1,470
Education	1,350
Birds of Phx & Maricopa Co. (storage)	1,279
Book & merchandise purchases	1,115
Honorariums	900
Administration & Website	728
Conservation	397
Property Tax	75

**Total Expenses** **\$28,229**

# CONSERVATION UPDATE

by Mark Horlings

## SAN PEDRO RIPARIAN NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA (SPRNCA)

Last year, MAS members and many others wrote the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) objecting to BLM's plan to open 20,000 additional acres of SPRNCA to cattle grazing. BLM relented, and the final management plan dropped the idea. Cattle were not allowed in new areas of SPRNCA but could continue to graze on the 7000 upland acres previously approved for cattle grazing. No one told the cows. A visit to the Hereford area in October, 2020 found cows in prohibited areas and showed that cows had been in the river. It remains uncertain whether the offending cows belong to a SPRNCA permit holder or a neighboring rancher.

## VERDE RIVER

### Cattle Grazing

On September 17, 2020, MAS and other conservation groups sued the Forest Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife for failing to protect the Verde River from wandering cattle. A permit system allows cattle to graze along upland stretches of the river. The river itself, home to endangered species, is off limits. Permits to graze cattle spell out these restrictions, but both ranchers and the Forest Service have looked the other way when fences collapse and cattle wander.

A recent study revealed grazing damage along most of the river. MAS and the Center for Biological Diversity sent the required Notice of Intent to Sue to the Forest Service in March, 2020, and, when the Forest Service failed to take action, filed suit.

### Grant Will Reduce Water Use

In other Verde River news, the Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Verde River received a \$1.2 million grant. The two nonprofits had issued a report earlier assessing the condition of the river and threats to its health. The groups will use the money to improve agricultural water efficiency. Canals will be sealed and improved irrigation systems installed to reduce water loss.

## Migratory Bird Treaty Act

The Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) was first passed in 1916 to fulfill the United States' obligations to Canada under a treaty providing for the protection of birds which migrate between the two countries. Subsequent amendments have extended the protections to birds migrating from Mexico and other countries. The MBTA protects more than 1100 U.S. species; by comparison, the Endangered Species Act applies at this time to barely 100 species.

A permit system set up under MBTA regulates citizens' interactions with migratory birds. When a Fountain Hills golf club sought to banish Turkey Vultures from its fairways and needed an MBTA permit to do so, several MAS members assisted in finding a solution.

When things go wrong, the MBTA allows the U.S. to impose penalties if migratory birds are killed or injured. For example, more than \$100 million in fines were levied after the Deepwater Horizon disaster. That money helped restore habitat and repair barrier islands in the Gulf of Mexico. Inadvertent killings, such as resulted from the Exxon Valdez disaster and Deepwater Horizon, are often the largest and most harmful.

Federal agencies have long argued that the MBTA applies when birds are inadvertently or negligently harmed, as well as when they are killed deliberately. The federal courts, however, have split: some adopted the broader interpretation pushed by the federal agencies; others ruled that the criminal penalties imposed by the MBTA should not be imposed without a showing of intent.

Beginning in 2017, the Trump Administration adopted the narrower position, saying in an administrative memo that MBTA fines would not be imposed if migratory birds died because of industrial accidents, electrocution, collisions with buildings, or other events in which harming birds was not the intended purpose. In June, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USF&WS) sought

to formalize this policy, publishing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to consider the effect of permanently exempting unintended killings. The DEIS concluded that the change would increase certainty in enforcement (since the courts would all agree) and reduce costs to industry (no argument there), but harm migratory birds by removing one major incentive for industry to protect them.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology estimates that industry kills between 450 million and 1.1 billion birds per year, virtually always without specific intent. These losses and other risks have resulted in the loss of about 30% of all U.S. birds over the past half century.

The MBTA has been an important tool for law enforcement in seeking to halt this decline. If the MBTA is gutted by this new interpretation, new legislation may be required. California has already passed a statute applying the federal rules in effect in January, 2017, to bird killings in California, and bills in the House of Representatives would restore liability for inadvertent bird killings under the MBTA.

## PETITION TO DELIST THE YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO DENIED

One of the 1100 species protected under the MBTA and also designated as threatened under the Endangered Species Act is the Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Loss of riparian habitat has reduced the Arizona population to fewer than 200 breeding pairs. In February, 2020, the USF&WS proposed to designate more than 400,000 acres as critical habitat for the remaining birds.

Despite the cuckoo's decline in population, business interests, including the Arizona Cattlemen's Association, had petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2017 to delist the cuckoo claiming it was genetically similar to the Eastern species and did not warrant protection. On September 16, 2020, the USF&WS denied the Petition. Its decision noted that mining projects in central and southern Arizona continue to degrade cuckoo habitat.





# Voting Matters

*... and not only on November 3rd,  
but for the MAS election.*

Because we will not be meeting in person for the foreseeable future, the Board of Directors has decided to hold elections and installation of newly elected officers during our December 1, 2020 Zoom member meeting. All MAS national and Friends members are eligible to vote. Non-members can join online before the meeting to be eligible.

Please send in any suggestions for Board chairs to our nominating committee. You can even nominate yourself!

#### **Nominating Committee:**

Tim Flood (chair) [tjflood@att.net](mailto:tjflood@att.net)  
Mel Bramley [melbramley@cox.net](mailto:melbramley@cox.net)  
Joy Bell [joyabell\\_az@yahoo.com](mailto:joyabell_az@yahoo.com)

In case you aren't a member already, or haven't renewed, you can fill in the form below and send a check made out to **Maricopa Audubon Society** to:

Vicki Hire/MAS Treasurer  
PO Box 603  
Chandler, AZ 85244

You can join online: <http://maricopaaudubon.org>

*The basic \$20 fee brings you four copies per year of The Cactus Wren•dition. We won't protest if you see fit to send more, and anything above that \$20 is tax deductible. Under-eighteens and students can join for \$10.*

- 
- Please sign me up as a new Member or
  - I'm already a Member and want to renew

Name \_\_\_\_\_

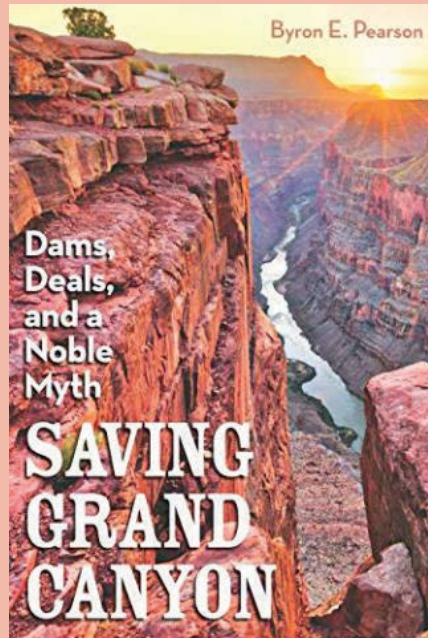
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

*Emails are used to send out monthly eNews and meeting announcements. We don't share your email with anyone.*

# SAVING GRAND CANYON

BOOK REVIEW BY MARK HORLINGS



## SAVING GRAND CANYON

by Byron E. Pearson  
University of Nevada Press  
2019, 342 pp. \$39.95

In *Saving Grand Canyon*, Byron E. Pearson returns to the turbulent 1960s and retells a story familiar to most MAS members: how the Sierra Club in particular and other conservation groups in general shifted their focus from conservation to environmentalism, and their tactics from education to advocacy. Mr. Pearson applauds the result as no dams were built in the Grand Canyon or so close to it that their reservoirs could flood the Grand Canyon, but contests the lesson many reached, that effective advocacy by the Sierra Club and the public outrage the Sierra Club mobilized forced the Bureau of Reclamation and Arizona politicians to abandon their plans.

*Saving Grand Canyon* is subtitled “Dams, Deals and a Noble Myth.” The book explains the dams and the deals, but Mr. Pearson seems intent primarily on deflating the “noble myth” that public pressure from the Sierra Club beat the dam builders. Understanding his argument requires some background, and the book amply provides it by reviewing fights from the 30s and 40s, in which plans for dams lost because they were unworkable, uneconomic or opposed by California and National Parks Service employees. The Sierra Club, including David Brower, actually endorsed plans for dams during these years.

*Saving Grand Canyon* gives Stewart Udall, John Kennedy’s Secretary of the Interior, credit for a comprehensive plan to build the Central Arizona Project (CAP), finance it by selling electricity from Grand Canyon dams, and enlist California in the effort by offering California water projects 7.5 million acre-feet per year of water from the Columbia River. Udall’s plan would have more than replaced the water Arizona would take from the Colorado for the CAP, insuring California’s cooperation.

Stewart Udall’s principal allies were Arizona politicians, including his brother, Congressman Morris Udall, the Bureau of Reclamation, and the California Congressional delegation, enticed by the prospect of all that water from the Pacific Northwest. Opponents included the Sierra Club, upper basin water interests represented by Wayne Aspinall, Chairman of the House Interior Committee, Dick Lamm, future Governor of Colorado, and Northwest politicians, principally Henry Jackson, determined not to forfeit a drop from the Columbia River.

I knew a number of the principals, having interned in Mo Udall’s Congressional Office in 1962 and worked with Dick Lamm when he was President of Zero Population Growth. I worked for David Brower at Friends of the Earth during the 1970s. Lunches with Brower often included veterans – activists,

photographers, copywriters and authors – from the Grand Canyon fights. Even if lunch had been arranged to discuss a shortage of funds for the next mailing (funds were always short at Friends of the Earth), the talk would turn to the 1960s, and the tactics of the fight against Arizona and the CAP. Once drinks were served, mists would envelop memories. Lunchtime conversation trended toward “we few, we happy few, we band of brothers...,” and the mailing at Friends of the Earth could be forgotten.

*Saving Grand Canyon* meticulously details the fight. David Brower and the Sierra Club used exhibit format books (*Time and the River Flowing*), the math of water evaporation behind dams, and newspaper ads (most famously, “Should We Also Flood the Sistine Chapel so Tourists Can Float Nearer the Ceiling”) to mobilize opposition. Arizona and the Udalls fought back by stressing the dams’ minimal impact to Grand Canyon National Park, by commandeering Sierra Club events, and by challenging whether the Sierra Club deserved 501(c)(3) deductibility.

Much of the bitterness the fight left now seems to be semantics. Yes, the Sierra Club emphasized that the “Grand Canyon” would be lost, without explaining that the dams, and even their reservoirs, would not have been built or seen in Grand Canyon National Park. Yes, the



Grand Canyon by David Chorlton



# TREE STORY: The History of the World Written in Rings

BOOK REVIEW BY DAVID CHORLTON

Sierra Club said the Grand Canyon would be flooded, even though a tourist at the rim could still look down and see a mile of canyon above any standing water. And Mo Udall did not seek to end the Sierra Club's tax exemption, just the ability of donors to deduct contributions.

Reading the book now, a greater problem seems to be the alternative to revenue-producing dams the conservation groups suggested: nuclear power allowing desalinization on a massive scale. The ensuing fifty years have not been kind to either of these technologies. David Brower turned Friends of the Earth against nuclear power in the 1970s, and nuclear power remains unworkable absent government subsidy and protection from liability. The Yuma desalinization plant stands as a continuing symbol of a working but ineffective technology.

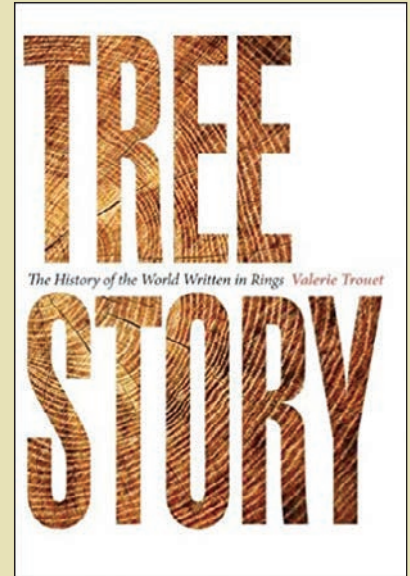
*Saving Grand Canyon* does a remarkable job of explaining the details of the fight, the interests that competed, and the Congressional hearings that determined the outcome. However, the author doesn't draw the personalities involved, or their motivations, nearly as well. Both Udalls left a long history of action favoring the environment, and Steward Udall's *The Quiet Crisis* had a major impact. Yet in this fight, they were fierce opponents of conservation. Did they promote the Grand Canyon dams because loyalty to Arizona dictated it, because their political futures depended on it, or because they genuinely felt the environmental impact would be small? Even the villains of the piece, Floyd Dominy at the Bureau of Reclamation, for example, could have been drawn with more sympathy and detail. These combatants, including David Brower and his allies, were colorful characters, and the author interviewed most of them. His book would be better if their contradictions, passions and personalities came through.

For whatever reason, however, Mr. Pearson chose his principal task as demystification: to show that Congressional procedures and Scoop Jackson, not David Brower, not the Sierra Club, and not public outrage, scuttled the 1960s plans for dams in the Grand Canyon. That, given Congress' committee system and insulation from public opinion, Stewart Udall's success in getting California to favor the CAP was a necessary but not sufficient step. His argument is a narrow one, but *Saving Grand Canyon* makes it well. 🦘

Valerie Trouet is an associate professor in the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona. Her book describes the science of dendochronology in a lively manner that invites the interest of the layman and explains the valuable applications of tree-ring study. She demonstrates the methods revealing the histories inside the trunks of trees and explains what we learn about Earth's climate over the broad span of time.

Trouet studied in Belgium, and worked extensively with forests of the old world before taking up her position on this side of the Atlantic. Europe no longer has trees the age of some New World trees, but scientists have still been able to trace times of extensive deforestation such as that of the Roman Period, and the relief forests felt after the Black Death had reduced population and shifted economic priorities.

The book features much by way of insight as to how major climatic events such as volcano eruptions or earthquakes left their marks on historic cultures including those in ancient Egypt and Rome, and in the Southwest Mesa Verde and Chaco Canyon, all of which makes fascinating reading while most relevant to us in the here and now, may well be the clear evidence revealed on climate change. There is more to dendochronology than establishing the ages of trees, and by using tree-ring data, ice-core data, and other temperature proxies scientists have illustrated the steep rise in the warming curve for the Northern Hemisphere at the end of the twentieth century, a curve still rising. We may have to imagine the birds that have made their homes in the forests that feature here, but



**TREE STORY:** The History of the World Written in Rings  
by Valerie Trouet  
Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020  
246 pp. \$27.00

the studies described are of major importance to them as they are to us.

Through anecdotes about her expeditions to remote places and interactions with her fellow scientists Valerie Trouet helps draw her readers into the world she inhabits and helps us see the work she does as it is practiced. She is well qualified to express amazement that a fiction writer, Michael Crichton, was able to testify as a witness before a US Senate committee on the validity of scientific research. And she does not hesitate to offer this caution: *And therein seems to lie a key motivation for this dogged political inquisition and intimidation: to keep climate scientists from doing their job – studying natural and man-made climate change and sharing their findings with the world.* 🦘

# A Year at *South Mountain*

by Gail Cochrane — photos by Gail Cochrane

**O**n the south side of South Mountain, sheltered from the traffic and industry of downtown Phoenix, where lush landscaping provides water and shelter and several golf courses offer open space, a robust population of wildlife thrives. This southwestern edge of South Mountain Park is accessed through Ahwatukee by a number of trails: Desert Classic, Telegraph, National, Busera and Pyramid. Over the eons water has etched ephemeral washes down from the ridges of South Mountain, and stands of palo verde and ironwood trees cluster in these channels, sharing sandy bottoms with brittlebush and desert lavender. Above, on the flats and hillsides, saguaro cacti dot the landscape, while cholla and staghorn sprawl and creosote holds firm to the earth.

Many desert bird species are drawn to the shelter and food sources found here, and can be commonly seen year-round. This year large coveys of Gambel's Quail have been most apparent. I've watched them work their way across the desert, scratching at the dry soil, and pushing aside pebbles in search of buried seeds. Black-tailed Gnatcatchers flick their tails and pursue insects in thickets and chipping Verdins busily glean among creosote and ironwood branches. Cheeky Cactus Wrens call from the tops of saguaros, while at ground level, Rock Wrens hop amid boulders.

In winter Ladder-backed Woodpeckers probe the bark of desert trees, and Black-throated Sparrows flock in the low branches of ironwoods. As early as December Great Horned Owls can be heard hooting to mates at dawn and dusk. A Red-tailed Hawk pair soars in aerial displays, recommitting for another breeding season. Both Anna's and



Ash-throated Flycatcher

Costa's Hummingbirds begin nesting in January and February. Gila Woodpeckers and Gilded Flickers drill cavities in saguaros early in the year, leaving time for calluses to form over the wounds before nesting season starts.

In spring White-winged Doves show up to begin their annual love affair with saguaros, feeding first on nectar and then fruits of the stately cacti, and carrying juicy bits to their youngsters. When the heat builds and seeds form on desert plants, the desert is alive with nesting birds. Northern

Mockingbirds patrol their territories, Mourning Doves throw together their airy nests, and flocks of House Finches twitter, the males resplendent in crimson plumage.

Some of the rarer species make for an exciting birdwatching outing. I'm thrilled to see Ash-throated Flycatchers, chasing insects in looping flight, or a Cooper's Hawk glaring down from the dense crown of a palo verde. A Loggerheaded Shrike is an infrequent visitor to a particular power line trail, while Greater Roadrunners pop up unexpectedly, usually in the vicinity of a wash. In June I hear the guttural syllables of a Common Raven, and see the black form hunched at the top of a fruiting saguaro.

Our backyard borders the South Mountain Preserve, and this edge is an area of overlap for desert residents and migratory species that stop by to visit our water fountain. This summer we enjoyed seeing Western Tanagers, Western Kingbirds and Hooded Orioles. Finches, mockingbirds, hummingbirds and quail are frequent fountain visitors. 🌵

*Gail Cochrane is a frequent contributor to The Cactus Wren•dition, and a frequent visitor to South Mountain trails.*



White-winged Dove



House Finch



Western Tanager

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Many Maricopa Audubon members aren't aware that their employers may include a matching gift program in their benefits package. Programs vary from business to business, but they generally offer a dollar-for-dollar match when an employee makes a personal gift to a nonprofit organization like Maricopa Audubon Society.

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GREAT EGRET  
by Tam Ryan







# Barn Swallows

## Nesting in the Phoenix Area

BY TOM GATZ PHOTOS BY MATT VANWALLENE



When I moved to Arizona in 1981, there were no known nests of Barn Swallows in Phoenix or anywhere in Maricopa County. A few nests have been found since, but, as of 2017 they remained listed as a “rare and very local late spring and summer resident.” Now, in 2020, summer Barn Swallows are being found at more and more locations in the greater Phoenix area. Are they just now becoming more common? Or did the COVID-19 virus result in many of us birding closer to home as I did, often in seldom-birded areas in town, resulting in discovering locations where Barn Swallows may have already been nesting for a while?

The first Barn Swallow nest found in Maricopa County was in 1987 at the Gilbert sewage ponds. It wasn't until almost ten years later during the Breeding Bird Atlas surveys in 1996 when twelve more nests were located, this time under low, dimly lit, road culverts near Aguila, west of Wickenburg where they continue to nest annually. Two nests were located at Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area in south Phoenix in 2007. In 2011 and 2012 nesting was documented at the Tempe canal between Mesa and Tempe and at the Central Arizona Project (CAP) canal south of Southern Avenue near the US 60 from 2010-2012. Four or fewer summer Barn Swallow

sightings were reported each year on *eBird* in Maricopa County from 2006 to 2019.

Fast forward to March of 2020 when John Weser, a biology professor at Scottsdale Community College, found Barn Swallows (and later, two occupied nests) under the AZ 202 bridge over the South Canal in Mesa. I re-checked this bridge August 1st and found



The Barn Swallow—not herons and egrets, as is widely believed—has the distinction of indirectly leading to the founding of the conservation movement in the United States. The destruction of Barn Swallows for the millinery trade apparently prompted George Bird Grinnell's 1886 editorial in *Forest and Stream* that led to the founding of the first Audubon Society in North America.

twenty-four likely Barn Swallow nests, all of them empty except for two with recently fledged young still being fed by their parents. In June and July of 2020, Janice Anderson, Don Witter and Walter Thurber reported Barn Swallows at the Reach 11 Recreation Area along the CAP Canal in north Phoenix and Walter observed seven Barn Swallows flying under the Cave Creek Road CAP bridge. David Pearson reported them in June at the Chandler water treatment plant on the Gila River Indian Reservation. Additional June-July 2020 *eBird* reports, several of multiple birds, were from the Arlington Wildlife Area and Paloma Ranch, both southwest of Phoenix, the Riggs and Price Roads ponds, the Salt River Granite Reef Recreation Area, the Glendale Recharge Ponds and Lake Pleasant.

I was curious just how widespread Barn Swallows were along the CAP canal. In July 2020, I checked thirteen bridges over the CAP canal between the I-17 Highway and the Beeline Highway. While none were found under the two taller bridges that I checked, Barn Swallows were found using ten of eleven of the bridges that were low to the water, apparently providing the more sheltered areas where Barn Swallows prefer to build their mud nests. Most bridges only had





Unlike Cliff Swallows, Barn Swallows prefer less exposed nesting sites. Before people showed up, Barn Swallows apparently nested mostly in caves.

a pair or two of Barn Swallows flying back and forth under the bridges, apparently feeding young, but one bridge had a colony of fifteen or more Barn Swallows using the bridge. Because of the low height of the bridges over the water, no nests could be observed. Several of the bridges also had Black Phoebes present, another bird that likes to build its very similar mud nest in sheltered locations.

Still curious about just how widespread Barn Swallow nesting in the Phoenix area might be and wondering if there was something unique about the CAP bridges that made them especially attractive to nesting Barn Swallows, I checked eight bridges along the Arizona Canal, five bridges along the Tempe Canal and three bridges along the South Canal. Although these three older canals had been here much longer than the CAP canal, and most of their bridges were also low to the water, no Barn Swallows were observed near any of those I checked. It is unknown why these bridges do not, at least not yet, support Barn Swallows. However, I did note that the vertical walls under the old Arizona Canal bridges and under some of the older bridges along the Tempe and South canals were perhaps not as suitable for attaching their mud nest as were the newer CAP and AZ 202 South canal bridge walls which were sloping and/or had ledges that could possibly better support nests. Barn Swallows will often use, but apparently do not require, some vertical surface irregularity and/or a ledge on which to attach their mud nests. It is also possible that canal bridges in some of these more urban

locations lacked a nearby source of mud during the nesting season.

Considering that Barn Swallows are a common breeding species in southeastern Arizona, and have continued to expand their range in Arizona and throughout much of North America and are, in fact, the most widespread and abundant swallow in the world, it is unclear why it has apparently taken them until now to become more common in the Phoenix area. However, for anyone moving here from almost any other part of the country, they are now a happy reminder of long summer days back home and one more welcome harbinger of spring.

Troy Corman, Avian Monitoring Coordinator at the Arizona Game and Fish Department, added these interesting observations:

*I enjoy witnessing breeding bird distribution changes and am rather perplexed as to why it has taken some species so long to take advantage of urban settings. Why did it take so long for the adaptable Common Ravens to finally start nesting within the Phoenix metro area? I moved here in the early 1980s and Ravens were very seldom even seen in Phoenix or southwest down the Gila River valley...now they're expected. With all the planted forests and big shade trees within urban parks, cemeteries and neighborhoods, why has it only been within the past decade or so that Cooper's Hawks have begun nesting and quickly expanding within the Phoenix metro area? They have always nested within the cottonwood and willow lined drainages just outside the metro*

area. One note is that this rather recent adaptation for urban nesting by Cooper's Hawk is occurring throughout North America. Now, within the past three to five years, Vermilion Flycatchers have taken hold and become permanent residents in many urban parks and golf courses with open stands of tall mesquite. They were not found nesting within metro Phoenix during the Breeding Bird Atlas surveys. Such are the joys of living and birding in the same areas for decades. 🐦

Tom Gatz has been a Maricopa Audubon member since 1981

Thanks to Troy Corman, David Pearson, Walter Thurber, Steve Waters, John Weser, Don Witter, and Janet Witzeman for helping me with this article.

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## GROCERY SHOPPING?

**Support Maricopa Audubon when you shop at Fry's Food Stores.**

MAS is part of Fry's Community Rewards Program. Register your Fry's VIP card and select Maricopa Audubon #89166 as your non-profit organization at no cost to you. Go to <https://www.frysfood.com/topic/new-community-rewards-program>

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# FEEDING BACKYARD BIRDS

## THE BREAKFAST CLUB

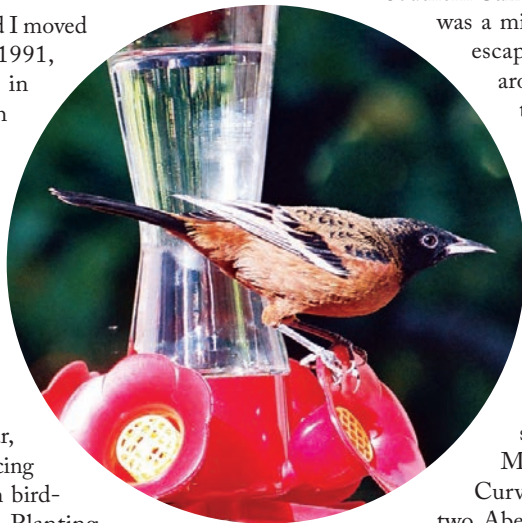
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by Paul Halesworth

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# M

My wife Gloria and I moved to Arizona in 1991, locating ourselves in Ahwatukee, which at that time was much smaller than it is today. Our house was not quite 5 years old, and was very sparsely landscaped. Being interested in wildlife and birds in particular, we set about enhancing the back yard with bird-friendly features. Planting trees and more shrubs helped greatly to attract birds; the most important installation was the construction of a small in-ground water feature. This really set in motion the attraction of birds, even ducks and the occasional Black-crowned Night Heron.



In the early years we did not put out a wide variety of food. Only years later, after we got involved in active wild bird rescue and rehabilitation, did we expand the food offerings. As the years progressed we started to see a wider variety of birds, with our first interesting sighting being an Ash-throated Flycatcher. It reappeared several consecutive summers, roosting overnight on the blades of a patio ceiling fan. We did not attempt to feed it...it seemed to manage very well on its own.

In the first week of August 2010 I noticed an unusually colored bird in our pepper tree. After getting a good look at it I

could not identify it at all. Crested, with some bright red markings and an overall profile similar to a Cardinal I realized more expert ID help was needed. I e-mailed a photo to Troy Corman at AZ Game & Fish, and he quickly replied that it was a Red-vented Bulbul, a native of South East Asia, mainly India. Further research told me that there are small populations of Red-vented Bulbuls in Florida and

Southern California, so this Bulbul was a migrant or someone's escaped pet. It stayed

around our house for the better part of two years, com-

peting with the backyard locals for mealworms.

The locals recognized it as an outsider, and were not very tolerant of it.

Our regular locals consist of six Northern Mockingbirds, two

Curve-billed Thrashers, two Abert's Towhees, three

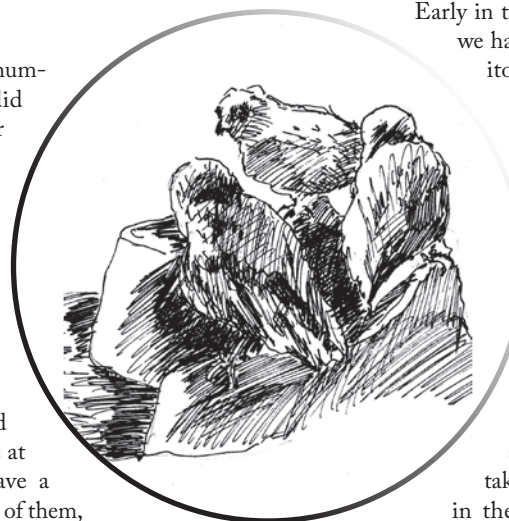
Gila Woodpeckers, and a

Gilded Flicker.

As for attracting hummingbirds we did have a single feeder for a number of years, and a male Costa's claimed it as his alone, driving off the occasional Anna's that would try to feed. After a number of years rehabbing and releasing hummers at home we now have a sizeable population of them, so much so we had to increase our feeder count to seven. During the spring and summer we change out several of the feeders a day. A high point for non-resident birds in

our backyard occurred in 2012, with the arrival of four species not seen regularly or frequently: first to appear was a Green-tailed Towhee, which immediately mixed in with the regulars at feeding time. Shortly after the towhee's entrance a Hermit Thrush made its presence known with its distinctive calls. It also adapted quickly to the mealworm regimen. Then what I first viewed from some distance turned out to be a male Orchard Oriole, not an American Robin. It too got into the feeding regimen.

Later that same week we kept hearing a call we could not identify, being that it was coming from dense shrubbery on one side of the backyard. Waiting patiently one morning I finally saw the source of the calls--a Gray Catbird. These four sightings occurred around the time of the Great Backyard Bird Count, and two of them--the Oriole and the Catbird--created a bit of a stir. I had to provide photo proof to the GBBC for documentation. All four of them stayed around our house until the end of March, and then were gone, migrating to their breeding locales. All in all a very rewarding year, most likely not to be repeated.



Early in the spring of this year we had some backyard visitors that we had not

seen before: a family of Western Screech Owls. Before

dawn one morning I glanced

out the kitchen window and spotted three small shapes in

our small water feature. A closer

look revealed three screech owl juveniles taking a communal bath

in the deeper part of the water. I watched for a while,

and as daylight approached I noticed two more screech owls perched in the tree alongside above the water: adults watching their young. They would not leave until





after dawn, so they watched me throw super worms to the regulars, and one morning joined in the feeding commotion. That's when we named them the Breakfast Club. All five owls appeared every morning until about the end of April, then the parents would be there infrequently. Currently, only the juveniles show up regularly before dawn and just after sunset. They patiently wait in the tree by the water, or on the patio roof posts, ready to dive and pounce on the super worms, then leave for a day of rest before repeating the cycle.

Backyard feeding is very interesting and enjoyable, but can be expensive. We buy 3000 super worms online and that amount lasts about one month. So my feeding advice is don't get the birds started on super worms! 🐛

*Paul Halesworth lives near South Mountain and provides information on bird rehabilitation as WildWing Rehabilitation, Ahwatukee, AZ*



#### Photos and Illustrations

Orchard Oriole by Karren Wood

Drawn from a photograph by Paul Halesworth of the Screech Owls' Breakfast Club I

Drawn from a photograph by Paul Halesworth of the Screech Owls' Breakfast Club II

Gray Catbird by Karren Wood

# Costa's



I

The roofline holds its breath.  
Clouds burn at their edges  
and scatter dove calls  
across the early silence  
when all that moves  
is a jasmine scented heartbeat.

II

First thought on waking: something  
left over from a dream,  
and when it flies away  
it leaves a contour  
printed on the air.

III

In motion, he's a moment  
escaping time.



David Chorlton



# COUNTING CORVIDS and more BACKYARD BIRDING fun!



Backyard suet & seed feeders

**Did you know** that by adding the letter “R”, you can change COVID-19 to a fun and entertaining discussion about CORVIDS in 2020 with your beginning birder? Corvids are a family of birds that includes crows, ravens, and magpies and are called Corvidae. They are stout-billed passerine birds.

**Did you know** CORVIDS are songbirds with more than 120 species worldwide? They are some of the most intelligent birds on the planet. The most common CORVIDS you may see are the American Crows, Common Ravens, and Blue Jays.

**Did you know** Ravens are the largest CORVID and can reach up to twenty-six inches from their beak to their tail? Their wingspans can reach up to four feet. Ravens communicate with each other using gestures, but they are also capable of imitating human speech and other sounds such as car engines.

**Did you know** Crows are the second largest CORVID and are about two-thirds the size of a raven? Crows are not jet-black all over but are iridescent purple. There are forty species of crows in the world, but none of them live in Antarctica. Crows can learn how to use tools to do certain tasks and can even make their own tools on occasion.

**Did you know** Crows need only one experience to form a long-lasting memory? All CORVIDS have relatively big brains for their size. But while a seed storer like a Pinyon Jay or a nutcracker has a huge hippocampus—a region involved in memory—crows and ravens are more like primates. They have exceptionally large forebrains, the domain of analytical thought, higher-level sensory processing, and flexible behavior. <sup>1</sup>



Common Raven

**Did you know** Steller’s Jays and Blue Jays are CORVIDS? Blue Jays have a tiny pocket in their throats called a gular pouch which can hold up to three acorns. Jays are “scatter hoarders.” They collect and save thousands of acorns each year, far more than they consume. Scientists are hoping to find a way to use the blue seed-dispersing bird as an efficient way to restore landscape destroyed by wildfires. <sup>2</sup>

**Did you know** you can encourage CORVIDS and other bird species to visit your backyard by providing clean fresh water and an environment safe from predators? Replacing lawns with native vegetation, marking windows so birds do not fly into them, keeping cats indoors, and maintaining dead trees available for nesting sites are all examples of ways to create





Backyard Feeder with Gila Woodpecker & Abert's Towhee



Steller's Jay



Curve-billed Thrashers gathering nest material

## The Great Backyard Bird Count Feb. 12-15, 2021

Be prepared to be a part of the world's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded! It's free, it's fun, and anyone can do it! And like its name implies, takes place right in your own BACKYARD!

Why does counting birds matter? Scientists use the information from the GBBC, along with other projects to learn about bird populations and answer questions about bird migration, bird disease, *weather and climate change.*

More than 42,480,000 birds were counted during the 2020 GBBC, with over 254,000 checklists submitted from more than 100 countries!

*No matter what your age, you can participate!*

### Here's how to get started:

1. Register at: <https://gbbc.birdcount.org/get-started/>
2. Count birds for at least fifteen minutes on one or more days of the GBBC. You can count for longer than that if you wish!
3. Enter your results on the GBBC website or download the free eBird Mobil app to enter data.

Mark your calendar and have your binoculars, pen and paper ready. Help protect birds and the environment that we share. Together we can make our local birds count.

safe backyard bird refuges. Natural sources of food are important, such as fruit trees and shrubs that produce berries. Avoid the use of insecticides or pesticides to remove insects, which are a source of food for many birds. Clean all feeders and bird baths frequently. Skip the leaf raking and allow for the birds to forage for food in the leaves. Remember that you can play an important part in preserving nature and in helping to keep a balance in our ecosystem. 🐦

- 1 <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/march-april-2016/meet-bird-brainiacs-american-crow>
- 2 <https://www.audubon.org/magazine/winter-2019/these-students-are-partnering-corvids-replant>

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# Fun & easy backyard fun with leftovers! ~ Pumpkin bird feeder

By Vicki Hire



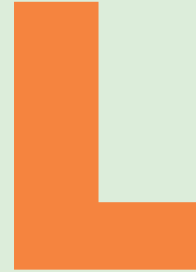
House Finch



Cactus Wren



Albert's Towhee



Leftover pumpkin from Halloween or Thanksgiving? Why not have some fun and create a pumpkin bird seed feeder for your backyard feathered friends?

**Warning: Adult supervision required!**

## Materials:

- Small to medium sized pumpkin, up to 10 pounds
- Small sticks or dowels
- Twine or rope or wire
- Birdseed or suet
- Scissors, spoon, knife
- Hook

## Steps:

- 1.** Decide whether you want to cut the pumpkin in half for two feeders, or design a side opening from which the birds will feed. Using a marker to draw the openings will help guide you where to cut.
- 2.** Scoop out the seeds, leaving a hollow inside with 1/2-inch thick shell wall.
- 3.** Insert two wooden dowels or small twigs across the open pumpkin to create perches for the birds.
- 4.** Knot two lengths of rope together at the center and tack the knot to the bottom of the pumpkin feeder. Hang the other ends of the rope in your chosen feeder location.
- 5.** Fill with birdseed, sunflower seeds, or suet.



# Wren•dition Revisited

Eared Trogons appeared in South Fork of the Chiricahua Mountains this summer. Back in 2001, Jim Burns wrote about the species for the Wren•dition.

## ARIZONA SPECIAL SPECIES: EARED TROGON

by Jim Burns

az special species

**A**lthough Eared Trogon is still officially considered accidental in Arizona, and although anyone coming to Arizona to look for one not already staked out would be considered not to have a life, this should not preclude *Euptilottis neoxenus* from the list of Arizona's special species—species found only here or more easily here than in any other state. Ask the three doctors from San Diego who drove all night for a ten second look at the male, which hung around Hamburg Meadow in upper Ramsey Canyon of the Huachuca Mountains in September of '91.

Eared Trogon, a rare and local endemic in the mountains of northwest Mexico, was not recorded in the states until 1977. It is instructive that this first record was for October in Cave Creek Canyon of Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains. Since that time there have been about two

dozen confirmed sightings north of the border, all in Arizona, well over half in the months of August, September, and October, most of them in our state's "Mexican Mountains," the Chiricahuas, the Huachucas, and the Santa Ritas.

Because Eared Trogon is notorious as a late summer-early fall nester, if you don't have a life now is the time to search. This species utilizes cavities in large trees, typically high on canyon slopes in pine/oak forest. The only confirmed Arizona nest was found in Hamburg Meadow in October of '91. The failure of that nest was attributed to a combination of intrusive birder activity and an early cold front which brought rain and hail to the area. If you find an Eared Trogon, call the hotline. If you find an Eared Trogon nest, leave quietly, rejoice privately, and do not call the hotline.

This species' common name derives from its inconspicuous postocular (extending behind the eye) plumes. Though similar in color and shape to the highly sought and much more common Elegant Trogon of Arizona's southern mountains, Eared Trogon belongs to a different genus and is more closely related to the quetzals of Central and South America. Indeed, in Mexico this bird is called Eared Quetzal. Like the Elegant Trogon, Eareds subsist primarily on fruits and insects. They are known to fly-catch from exposed perches and hover-pluck berries from fruiting trees.

Eared Trogons have a variety of vocalizations, none of them anything like the coarse, almost raven-like two syllable "Kwah" of Elegants. Several sightings of Eareds have occurred because birders have heard the strange calls first and gone hunting the source. The most common of these calls

is the "squeal-chuk" which sounds like a grackle with hiccups. Another is one reminiscent of Northern Pygmy-Owl, though louder and more ringing, with a faster cadence.

Anyone who has spent a morning following the voice of an Elegant Trogon through creekside sycamores without glimpsing the bird will be well prepared for the frustrations of looking for Eared Trogon. Eareds are much more skittish than Elegants and they are more likely to hop over a ridge and disappear than to follow a drainage. They tend to forage at mid to upper story and they often vocalize in flight as they leave an area.

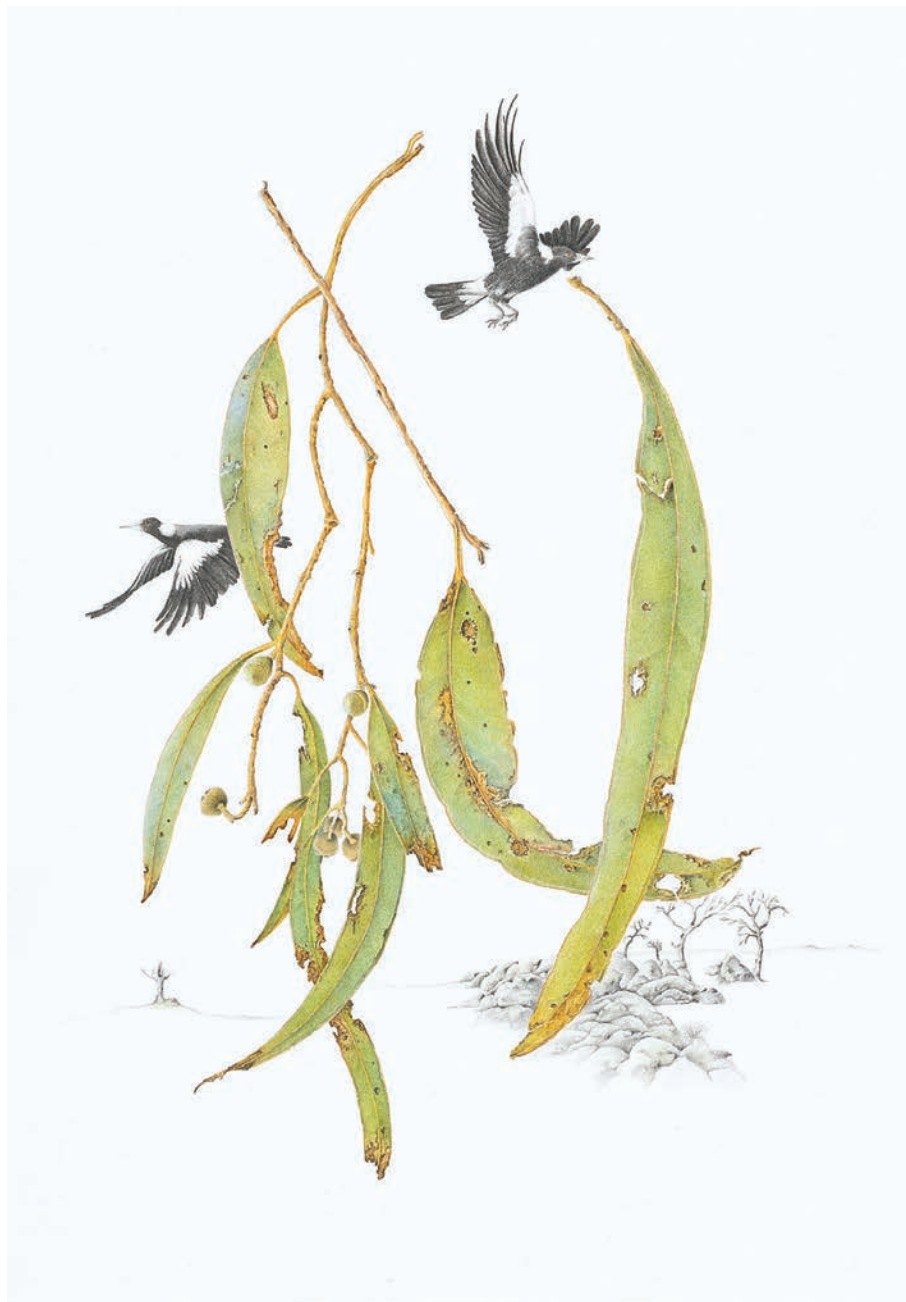
Since 1977, Arizona sightings of Eared Trogon have come every two to three years. The two most recent, the Haunted Canyon bird in the eastern Superstition Mountains in the winter of '96 and the Cave Creek Canyon bird at Thanksgiving of '99, rather atypically continued in a relatively small area for several weeks and several days respectively. Is this a trend? Probably not. It seems the only pattern for Eared Trogon in Arizona is that there is no pattern. But, it's about time again. Wait until the monsoon is officially over. Then go to the Chiricahuas and hike upper Cave Creek above the turnstile or go to the Huachucas and hike down from Ramsey Vista in upper Carr to Hamburg Meadow. If you don't see Eared Trogon you'll see some beautiful country.

The accompanying photograph was taken at Stewart Campground along the South Fork of Cave Creek, November 27, 1999. I wasn't able to photograph the Hamburg Meadow bird in '91. The three doctors thought their ten second look so special they started whooping and high-fiving. The trogon hopped the ridge and never came back. The doctors are lucky to be alive. Because of their insensitive behavior that morning, several people missed seeing the bird. ↓



Eared Trogon photographed at Stewart Campground, South Fork of Cave Creek, AZ 11/99. Photo by Jim Burns.

# Keen Sight and Patient Hands: Sharon Field, artist



This image comes from the books “*Monaro Runes*” I made through my ASBA Grant. It shows a healthy environment with *Eucalyptus viminalis* and Australian Magpies – wonderful songbirds.

In our last issue, we featured Sharon Field’s interview with Vicki Hire and learned about her as a fire-fighter. This time, we meet Sharon in her studio.

My art career began about ten years ago after careers in teaching and the civil service in various countries in the Pacific and Africa. My art focus is primarily botanical; however more recently, my work has explored the impact of people and climate change on the natural environment. We live in a precarious world. The degradation of habitats through urban development, farming, mining, fires and so on is having a massive impact on individual species and biodiversity generally. In turn, this affects us. I want my art to have an impact on people in this increasingly insecure situation.

But my work is also about my art practice. I want to create something beautiful that will inspire and move people to a greater awareness about what they see around them. I am drawn to the idea of telling a story through a visual narrative. Through my exhibitions, I have seen how very fine detail can not only capture a viewer of my artwork, but also hold them, and bring them back to look again and then to ask questions about the work. Similarly, my subject matter recognizes that while my botanical subjects have a toughness that we can barely begin to imagine, plants are still fragile and, in many cases, their future is uncertain.

I paint and draw every day for at least six hours, working from live specimens, in dry brush watercolour and graphite, and have developed my own technique for combining the two mediums. My images are extremely fine, and I am delighted that viewers of my work find this detail captivating.

My work has been exhibited in Australia and in London (UK), New York, and other places in the USA, and individual pieces are held in public and private collections in Australia and overseas. In 2017 I was the very proud recipient of the American Society of Botanical Artists ‘Anne Ophelia Dowden Award’, for which I did a major work on eucalyptus dieback in Australia. 🐦

Website: [www.sharonfield.com.au](http://www.sharonfield.com.au)  
Instagram: [sharon\\_field\\_artist](https://www.instagram.com/sharon_field_artist)





**“Finally falling to the land redundant”**

Watercolour and graphite  
17.0 x 13.5 cm

Of a similar shape, these leaves and feathers have each taken a fall to earth from high above the ground. In one sense they have become redundant. In another they remain relevant as they take on new and important roles in the woodland glades as they continue to change their form and function in response to the cycle of life. (The title for this work came from the poem “Beech Glade” by London-based poet, Toby Fay)



**“Quiescence – Cicada I”**

Watercolour and graphite  
17.0 x 8.0 cm

Cicadas are known for their buzzing and clicking noises, which can be amplified by multitudes of insects into an overpowering hum at the height of the summer heat. I collected these specimens from near the village of Mongarlowe when I was in that area as a volunteer fire fighter a couple of years ago.



**“Vignette - with a dim uncanny tinge”**

Watercolour and graphite  
11.0 x 19.0 cm

This is a leaf from an oak tree that I planted from a tiny acorn which is now thriving in my garden. It has survived droughts and heat, and provides a haven for many tiny insects, like this little moth. This leaf had been snapped off by a Sulphur Crested Cockatoo and was slowly losing its strong green colour as it lay on the ground. Its new colours were becoming much more subtle, like the natural colours of the little moth. The title for this work comes from the poem “In a Southern Garden” by well known Australian poet, Dorothea Mackellar.

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## MONTHLY MEETING

Due to coronavirus, we have delayed resuming our regular meetings. Contact a board member if you have questions, or check out our website at [www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org)

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND HOW TO RECEIVE *THE CACTUS WREN • DITION*

Two distinct memberships exist: membership of the National Audubon Society (NAS) and membership of the Friends of Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS).

To become a member of the NAS please go to:  
[www.audubon.org/audubon-near-you](http://www.audubon.org/audubon-near-you)

We send *The Cactus Wren•dition* to all current members of NAS if you are assigned to or choose MAS as your local chapter. NAS provides MAS \$3.00 per year for each member assigned to us.

To become a Friend of MAS, please pick up a form at the book sales table at our monthly meeting or visit our website, <http://maricopaaudubon.org>

For specific questions please contact our Membership Chair.

## SUBMISSIONS

Copy for *The Cactus Wren•dition* must be received by the editor by email by **January 15**, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. Some issues may feature a specific focus, so please feel free to enquire and take the theme into account. Email to: *The Cactus Wren•dition* Editor, David Chorlton: [chorltondavid3@gmail.com](mailto:chorltondavid3@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

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