

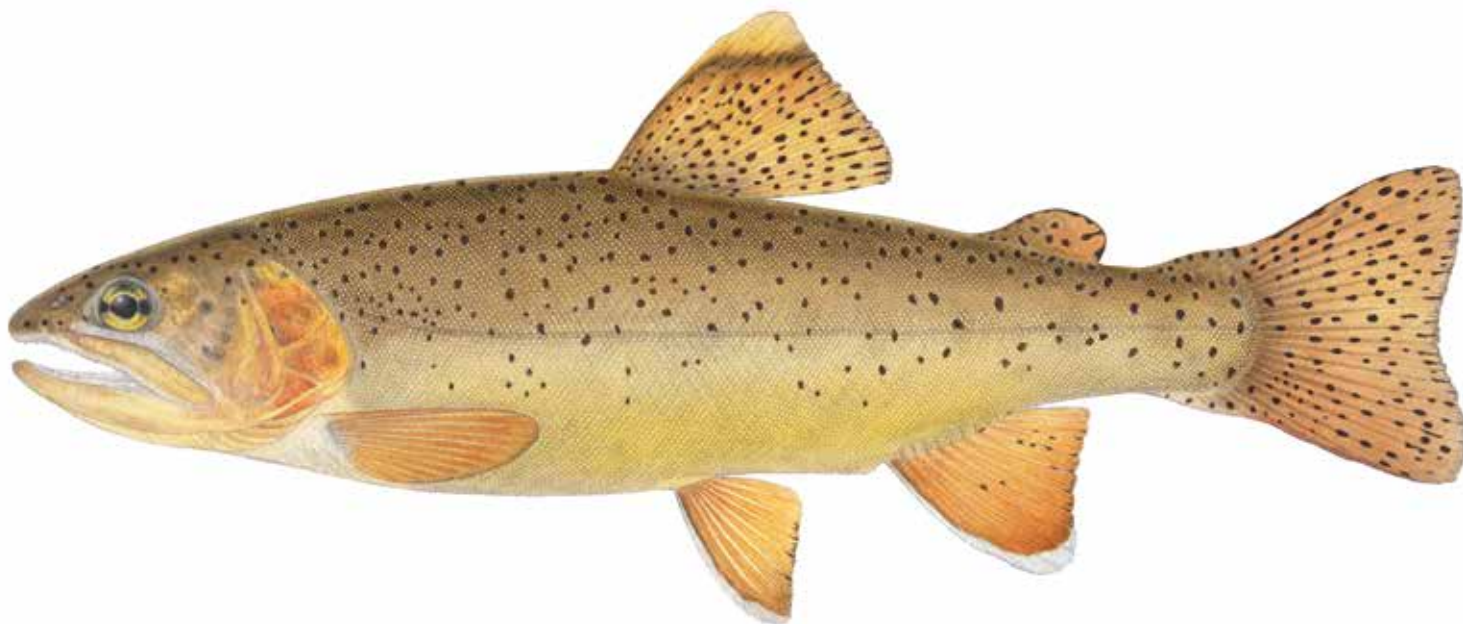


# The Cactus Wren-dition

VOLUME LXIX NO. 3

WINTER - 2023

*50 years*  
Endangered Species Act  
1973-2023



Apache Trout  
*Oncorhynchus apache*

pp. 8-10

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## On the Cover

Chase Bartee  
APACHE TROUT  
*Onchorhynchus apache*  
Watercolor and gouache  
11" x 14"

<https://tightloopsfly.com/@tightloopsfly>  
Photographer, artist, filmmaker

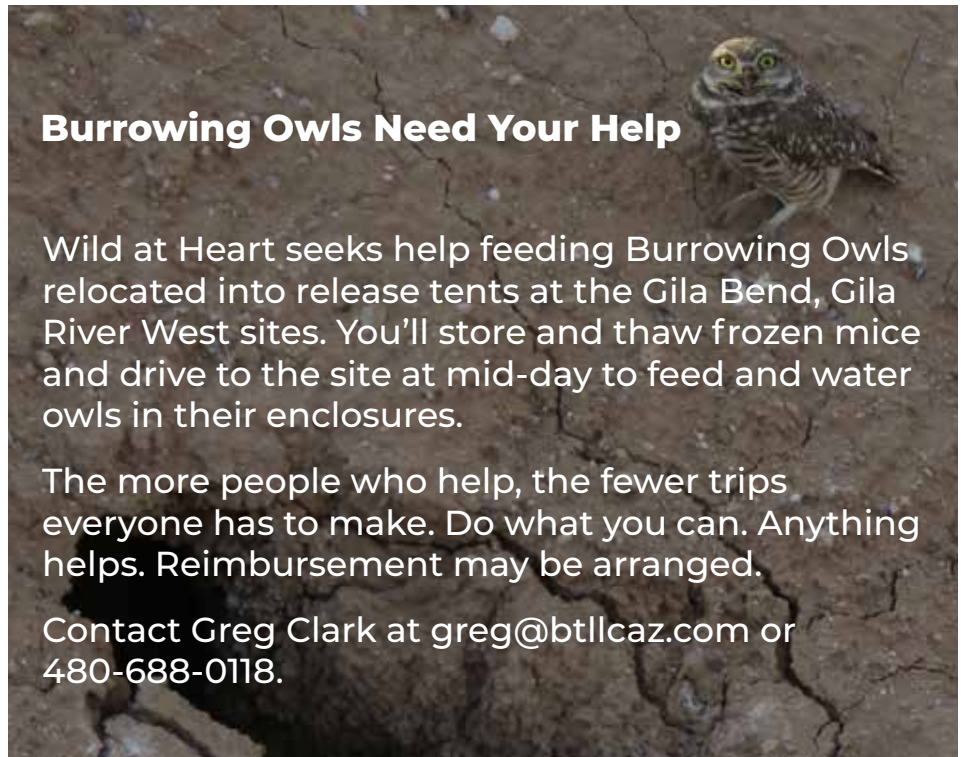
# Letter from the Editor



The Endangered Species Act, (ESA) was signed into law by President Nixon on December 28, 1973, 50 years ago. It has played a critical role in preventing the extinction of numerous species in our country. In this issue, Zac Daitch and Frank Kaplan write about the Apache Trout and the implications of its impending delisting. Charles Babbitt writes about another Arizona species, the Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl, that was recently relisted. In October, 21 species were removed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service due to confirmed extinction. 1,300 species remain on the list. Limitations with the ESA and the agency tasked with carrying out its mandate to protect and recover species means that we must continually advocate on behalf of these species.

Also in this issue, Tom Gatz reviews two books that confront the causes and responses to the collapse of North American avian populations. A second article by Babbitt delves into the natural history of five species of finches that could grace our state this winter. We have a field trip review by Kathe Anderson, a new county bird to report, and the fourth and last installment of a look back at our Chapter's history as we celebrate 70 years of birding, conservation and fellowship.

As always, I'm grateful for our cadre of phenomenal photographers whose images make this newsletter so compelling; and for all our writers and contributors. And, I welcome and urge you to become part of this fine group.



## Burrowing Owls Need Your Help

Wild at Heart seeks help feeding Burrowing Owls relocated into release tents at the Gila Bend, Gila River West sites. You'll store and thaw frozen mice and drive to the site at mid-day to feed and water owls in their enclosures.

The more people who help, the fewer trips everyone has to make. Do what you can. Anything helps. Reimbursement may be arranged.

Contact Greg Clark at [greg@btllcaz.com](mailto:greg@btllcaz.com) or 480-688-0118.

# Announcements

# COMMITTEES/SUPPORT

**Bookstore,** Sochetra Ly  
**Associate Editor,** Mark Larson  
**Poet Laureate,** David Chorlton

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


*Every part of the earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people...I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairies left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, men would die from the great loneliness of spirit, for whatever happens to the beasts also happens to man. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth, befalls the sons of the earth.*

-Chief Sealth, Duwamish Tribe

## 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.

## Sign up for the e-newsletter!

To receive meeting and field trip reminders, etc., subscribe to the monthly (September to May) e-Newsletter.

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

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



### REMINDER

All annual MAS Friends memberships begin or renew on April 1 and are prorated.

**PODCAST! Arizona Bird Call** - a polished compilation of interesting and useful material about Arizona birds and birding. Produced by Michael S. Ameigh, PhD, retired professor/administrator SUNY Oswego. Over 100 weekly episodes available. Search "Arizona Bird Call Podcast."  
<https://www.buzzsprout.com/1830489>.

November 2023 - April 2024

**Project FeederWatch:** For over 30 years, people have submitted data on birds at their feeders from November through April on a flexible schedule. The data help scientists understand long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance, the timing and extent of winter finch irruptions, disease vector distribution, and more.  
For details, visit [FeederWatch.org](http://FeederWatch.org).

January 20, 2024

**Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic Bird Survey:** This single-day census is conducted annually on the third Saturday of January by over 65 volunteers. Up to 65,000 wild waterbirds of 60 species have been documented in this otherwise desert urban area. Your help is needed! Contribute to citizen science, meet like-minded individuals, expand your knowledge of species. Contact Ashley Lauria [alauria@azgfd.gov](mailto:alauria@azgfd.gov).

January 20, 2024

**The 19th Annual Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Survey:** Many hawk species winter in southern Arizona, some in large numbers, augmenting resident populations. Data from this count help inform plans that could significantly alter wildlife habitat there. For more information, search Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Survey. To participate, contact [dougjenness@gmail.com](mailto:dougjenness@gmail.com).

February 16-19, 2024

**25th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC):** Data submitted on birds in your backyard or elsewhere provides a snapshot of bird populations. The GBBC was the first online citizen science project to display results on wild birds in near real time. Watch for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days and enter your data on Merlin or eBird.

March 30, 2024

### Fountain Hills Dark Sky Festival

Help raise awareness about the environmental benefits of protecting our dark skies. To volunteer, contact [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)  
Visit [birdcount.org](http://birdcount.org) for more information.



### Window Collision Abatement

A staggering number of birds are killed annually by flying into windows. You can help! Simply install bird friendly window film. Visit Audubon Southwest, 3131 S Central Ave, Phoenix, to see an elegant design that reduces bird collisions by 96%. And then go birding at Rio Salado!

# MEETINGS by Loren Hupe

MAS meetings, open to the public, are via Zoom and in-person on the first Tuesday of the month, September through April at Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N. 64th Street, Scottsdale. Zoom links are posted online before each meeting. Meetings start 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.

January 2, 2024

Evan Waite

## **Journey from Bugs to Birding: A Two-Year Perspective**

Evan Waite, an evolutionary biology Ph.D. student at Arizona State University, will talk about his journey from bugs to birds. He has always considered himself a naturalist but only seriously took up birding in October of 2021. After six years of academic entomology, he has shifted his primary pastime from the microscope to binoculars. He will discuss the differences between his career and his new hobby, and the challenges of doing both.



February 6, 2024

Greg Clark

## **Wild at Heart: Saving Burrowing Owls**

Western Burrowing Owls populations have declined for decades. Wild At Heart's Burrowing Owl Recovery Project is a comprehensive, multi-faceted effort to conserve this species in Arizona. Learn about these efforts to rescue, relocate, release, and monitor these owls and what you can do to help ensure their survival.

Greg Clark, an engineer, was a major contributor to the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas project. That project led to curiosity about the decline of Burrowing Owls in the West, and what could be done about it. In 2000 Greg decided to expand the earlier work started by Wild At Heart to rescue and relocate owls from areas about to be developed. Over 30 years this program has relocated thousands of owls to

artificial burrows and received recognition from Heroes, The North American Bird Conservation Initiative, The John Muir Association, and others.

March 5, 2024

Cindy Marple

## **Feathers, Beaks and Senses: a Little Bird Biology**

This easily digestible presentation is a great introduction to avian biology. You will get a bird's-eye view of how birds are adapted to the unique challenges they face. Both tyro and advanced birders alike will benefit from this interesting talk. Cindy Marple is a Nature Photographer whose favorite subject is birds. Her interest in birding has grown the more she observes and learns about birds. She teaches Birding Skills and Bird Photography through the City of Chandler Recreation Department and at Hassayampa River Preserve.





## 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.

Please visit the field trips page on the MAS website for the most recent listings.

Registration on Ticketleap required unless otherwise noted. Search Ticketleap online under Maricopa Audubon; or find links to the field trip you wish to attend on the MAS website. If you're concerned about online privacy or your computer skills, you may also register by contacting Mark Horlings. If you cannot attend, please cancel your reservation so someone else can join. To cancel a reservation, contact the leader or Field Trip Chair.

### AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

We'll start from North Phoenix, and explore two exits off the I-17 leading into the Monument for 3 hours or so. We'll find some gorgeous remote scenery of high chaparral and whatever birds make their winter home there. I'm hoping for Townsend's Solitaires, Robins, Western Bluebirds, raptors, sparrows and possibly Crissal Thrashers. Roads off I-17 lead to riparian areas along the Agua Fria River, and a moderate hike to visit petroglyphs. Wrap up with a picnic lunch at a park in Anthem. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip. | Time 7:30 am to 1:00 pm | Limit: 7 | Difficulty: 2 (uneven footing on the hike. | Note: No services at the Monument.)

Restrictions: All participants must have been vaccinated against Covid.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

### UPPER BEELINE HIGHWAY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

We'll start from Fountain Hills, exploring parts of the old, blocked-off Beeline Highway, mostly along Sycamore Creek. We can hope for a variety of woodpeckers and songbirds, including wrens, titmice, thrushes, sparrows, Mountain Chickadee, Hutton's Vireo, Western Bluebird and Townsend's Solitaire. If it looks like a nice day, we'll picnic at Fountain Hills Lake and add some waterfowl to our list. Meeting place and carpooling will be determined a few days before the trip. | Time: 6:30 am to 1 pm | Limit: 7.

Difficulty: 1 (mostly car birding)

Restrictions: All participants must have been vaccinated against Covid.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

### MONTEZUMA'S WELL

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

This trip features two rather different parts of the National Monument: the Well with its pond and high desert habitat, and the picnic area with sycamore riparian habitat, at about 3,400'. We should see a variety of chaparral and high desert species, including titmice, wrens, thrushes and other birds we rarely find in the Valley. The Well may include waterfowl. We might see a few early migrating warblers or vireos. We'll start from Scottsdale, plan to picnic at the Monument, and return about 1:30. Meeting place and carpooling logistics will be determined a few days before the trip. | Time: 6:30 am to 1:30 pm | Limit: 7 | Difficulty: 2 (uneven footing and rock stairs)

Restrictions: All participants must have been vaccinated against Covid.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

### RIPARIAN PRESERVE AT GILBERT WATER RANCH

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28TH

Gilbert Water Ranch is a magnet for resident and migrating birds throughout the year. Waterfowl, pelicans, and shorebirds gather in the various ponds, while herons and rails can be seen or heard along the edges. Numerous paths through the grounds yield a wide variety

of desert songbirds. This location is known for attracting rarities, so any visit could turn up an unusual species! We will walk roughly two miles of trails in this urban oasis, stopping to scan the ponds as well as birding the paths by sight and sound. Bring plenty of water and snacks, and prepare to layer as the mornings can be chilly. A spotting scope will be helpful for close-up looks at waterfowl and more. We'll meet in the main parking area at 2757 E Guadalupe Rd. Final details, including car pooling, etc, will be arranged by email at least a week in advance. Time: 8:00 am - 12:00 pm | Limit: 15 | Difficulty: 2 (flat terrain, moderate distance)

**LEADER: PAUL HEVERAN**

### HASSAYAMPA RIVER PRESERVE

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20

This 770-acre county park is a mix of cottonwood, willow, and mesquite riparian forests along a perennial section of the Hassayampa River. The Preserve has attracted an impressive 280 bird species. Entrance fee required. Meet in the Preserve parking lot.

Time: 8 A.M. to Noon | Difficulty: 3 (2.5 miles walking on mixed terrain).

**LEADER: JACOB BAGLEY**

### AGUA FRIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 26

We'll explore two exits off I-17 leading to riparian areas along the Agua Fria River, including a visit to petroglyphs in the AFNM for about 3 hours,

*Continued on page 11*

# ARIZONA'S WINTER FINCHES

by Charles Babbitt

*This article was originally printed in Arizona Wildlife Views.*

They are highly erratic and unpredictable winter visitors. In so called "flight years" they begin arriving in October or even earlier with numbers steadily increasing throughout the fall. By mid-winter flocks can be seen - especially in northern Arizona - searching for food in conifer forests or devouring seeds at snow covered feeders. Some years, winter flights can take them even further south into central, southern and western Arizona where they are seen in sycamore-dominated riparian habitats, urban parks, and even remote desert oases. These are the nomadic winter finches. The five species most likely to be seen in Arizona are Red Crossbill, Pine Siskin, Evening Grosbeak, Cassin's Finch and Lawrence's Goldfinch.

The winter finch species are highly prone to irruptions; occasions when large numbers of birds take flight and regularly move hundreds of miles beyond their normal winter ranges in response to food scarcity especially cone and seed crop failures. Although some feed on winter berries and other fruit when available, these finches are predominantly seed eaters. In the summer you are most likely to see them in western conifer forests where they feed on seeds extracted from cones. Some years however, regional cone and other seed crops are poor or even fail completely sending them on major fall flights in search of food. When this happens, we often get the opportunity to see, enjoy and study these beautiful winter visitors such as occurred in the winter of 2022-23 when Evening Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches, Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Lawrence's Goldfinches were reported in large and in some cases unprecedented numbers at many locations around the state.

## Red Crossbills



Photo by David Pearson

Of the winter finches, Red Crossbills are undoubtedly the oddest of the group. A close-up look reveals a beak that looks deformed with the lower mandible crossing under the upper mandible. This allows crossbills to pry open tightly closed cones to extract the seeds, an evolutionary adaptation that gives

them access to a unique food niche.

Red Crossbills are resident breeders in much of Arizona's upper elevation forests. In flight years, however, irruptions can bring roving flocks from out of the state swelling numbers in montane areas and sometimes bringing these boreal invaders into the lowlands. On rare occasions in late fall, I have seen brick red males in tamarisk and Aleppo pines in Phoenix and Scottsdale and rural areas near Gila Bend. During these flight years they have even been documented nesting in winter in exotic pines in metropolitan Phoenix.

## Pine Siskins



Photo by Charles Babbitt

Pine Siskins are one of the smaller winter finches. Year-round residents in Arizona's high country they are famous for their periodic irruptions. Movements are irregular and sporadic with birds being quite common some years and entirely absent other years. In the fall and early winter of 2020 Arizona birders were treated to a major movement of Pine Siskins with sightings - usually small flocks - reported from many lowland areas. Some were even reported wintering in desert city backyards that had feeders and water sources.

Pine Siskins have sharp narrow bills they use to extract seeds from the cones of a variety of conifers. In winter, flocks are often seen at feeders and in weedy fields. Fairly tame, they will sometimes allow close approach before exploding into flight. Pine Siskins are recognized by their streaky breasts and the bright yellow markings on their wings; in flight they show a distinctive yellow wing stripe. Among their various calls is a head turning up-slurred zzzsshreee.

## Evening Grosbeaks

Of the winter finches, Evening Grosbeaks are the most striking. These stocky birds have evolved massive cream-colored beaks which are unmistakable and which are used like nutcrackers to feed on a variety of large seeds, catkins and even small fruit pits. In northern Arizona you might see them feeding in



winter on Russian olive fruits and juniper berries.

Male Evening Grosbeaks are yellow and black with a distinct yellow forehead and eye brow and large white wing patches. Females are mostly gray with a yellowish-green collar and black and white wing markings.

In Arizona Evening Grosbeaks breed very locally in the high country. In the winter they form large noisy flocks. It is an unforgettable sight to see a flock of these colorful birds perched in snow covered conifers or bare deciduous trees like Christmas tree ornaments.

Like the other winter finches Evening Grosbeaks are irruptive, being more common some years than others. Those winters when they are around, they often delight northern and central Arizona feeder watchers by crowding onto feeders to eat sunflower seeds. Numbers of Evening Grosbeaks swell dramatically in flight years. The winters of 2015-16 and 2022-23 were particularly big flight years with flocks moving into lowland areas, especially along sycamore-lined drainages and adjacent stands of juniper trees.

### Cassin's Finches



Photo by Gary Rosenberg

Cassin's Finches are very local breeders in northern Arizona restricted mostly to the Kaibab Plateau and higher elevations of the Hopi and Navajo tribal lands. In the summer you are most likely to see them in pine and mixed conifer forests on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. Males are easily

recognized by their bright raspberry red caps and rosy tinged faces and breasts. Females are plainer with streaked breasts.

Cassin's finches are migratory and irruptive with great variability in distribution and abundance. Some winters - especially in northern and central Arizona - they can be quite common, their numbers increased by the influx of birds from north of the state. When they are around, Cassin's Finches visit feeders, often mixing with Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks. In major flight years they can wander widely. In late winter and during spring migration you can sometimes spot these hardy finches gathered in trees where they sing incessantly.

### Lawrence's Goldfinches

Some years Arizona is visited by winter finches that move into the state not from the north but from the west. These are Lawrence's Goldfinches, colorful birds whose breeding range is restricted mostly to the coastal ranges and foothills of the Sierra Nevada of California. There they occupy a



Photo by Cindy Mapple

variety of habitats including dry foothills, open woodlands and adjacent grasslands. In sporadic and unpredictable flight years some depart their breeding range, spreading eastward into the southern half of Arizona.

Lawrence's Goldfinches are a soft gray color with gold markings on the wings and chest. Males have black faces with contrasting pink bills while females tend to be less colorful. Their call has a characteristic tinkling bell-like quality.

The fall of 2021 was a fairly typical flight year for Lawrence's Goldfinches with birds arriving in western and southern Arizona beginning in late September. Throughout the fall there were many sightings, especially from the Tucson area where they were seen in small flocks often feeding on amaranth seeds. Lawrence's Goldfinches are seed eaters. As is the case with the other winter finches, seed crop failures due to drought are believed to be one of the principal drivers of their periodic movements into Arizona. More recently, massive wildfires within their breeding range may also be causing some populations to travel into Arizona and adjacent states in search of suitable winter food.

*continued on page 10*

# Apache Trout: Back from the Brink

After visiting the White Mountains for a wildlife biology class project, we became captivated by the beauty and magic of Eastern Arizona. Surrounded by golden aspens and a calming breeze, and witnessing such a rare species in its natural habitat was sublime. We immersed ourselves in learning all we could about Apache trout *Oncorhynchus apache*, Arizona's state fish.

Apache trout and Gila trout, relict outliers of the salmonid family, are the only native trout species in the state. Apache trout are golden or olive-yellow with purple and pink tints along the side. They have orangish ventral fins and black spots on their body, dorsal and caudal fins.



Photo credit: Freshwaters Illustrated

tains on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation of Eastern Arizona. The Black and White Rivers drain into the Salt River south of Mt. Baldy,

flow below 77°F, gravel substrate, shade and refuges such as undercut banks and boulders. Early 1800's pioneers found an abundance of



Headwaters, West Fork Little Colorado River.  
Photo credit: Freshwaters Illustrated.

The pelvic, anal and dorsal fins have distinctive light tips. They are similar to Gila Trout, but with fewer and larger spots, and black spots on either side of their pupils. Their average size is 0.5 pounds, and 5-9 inches long in the wild, though in manmade highcountry impoundments they can reach 20 inches and weigh up to 5 pounds.<sup>1</sup> They are opportunistic feeders, eating primarily aquatic and terrestrial invertebrates. They mature in three years and live up to six years in the wild.

Apache trout are endemic to three cold-water drainages above 5,900' in the Mt. Baldy *Báshzhiné Dził* watershed of the White Moun-

tains on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation of Eastern Arizona. The Black and White Rivers drain into the Salt River south of Mt. Baldy,

flow below 77°F, gravel substrate, shade and refuges such as undercut banks and boulders. Early 1800's pioneers found an abundance of

In 150 years, 96% of Apache trout were gone.

and the northern watershed drains into the Little Colorado River. All these rivers make their way to the Colorado River which

formerly drained into the Gulf of California. There is speculation of an

Apache trout along an estimated 820 river miles. But the trout suffered enormous pressure from subsequent over-grazing, -logging, -beaver trapping, and -fishing (there are historic photos of hundreds of fish caught in a day), road building, and agriculture. "Livestock compact and denude marshes and meadows, trample stream banks, and remove riparian vegetation," wrote W. L. Minckley in *Native Fishes of Arid Lands: A Dwindling Resource of the Desert Southwest*<sup>3</sup>.

To increase dwindling fish stocks, non-native

*Out of the 36 fish species native to Arizona, one species is already extinct; 34 have been identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need in Arizona; and, 22 have been federally listed as endangered or threatened.*

- Native Aquatic Species Conservation in Arizona

ancient heritage branching off from a primitive, ocean-going salmonid that invaded freshwaters during the mid-Pliocene creation of the Sea of Cortez through tectonic movement. Apache trout, along with Gila trout, were transported, via the Bouse formation c. 5 million years ago to their current headwaters.<sup>2</sup>

Apache trout require clean, adequate stream

trout were introduced in the early 1900's. The rainbow and cutthroat trout hybridized with the Apache Trout. They, along with brook and brown trout, outcompeted and preyed on the Apache trout, pushing them into a few headwater sanctuaries.

Dams, water diversion, and development added more obstacles to the trout's ability to



# by Zac Daitch and Frank Kaplan

In 2022, Zac and Frank started collecting field data to aid in the recovery of Apache trout. They connected with Ryan Follmuth, AZGFD Aquatic Wildlife Program Manager, who suggested they attend a population survey to fully understand the impact their citizen science efforts are making. It was at this moment a Apache Trout was born. They brainstormed ideas for raising funds and awareness about Apache trout from their Phoenix homes, almost 400 miles from where the trout live. They built a website, [aztrout.org](http://aztrout.org), which provides information on recreating in the White Mountains.

They sell clothing with all profits donated to AZGFD's conservation efforts. They are expanding their outreach with sponsored Ins-

stagram posts, website SEO, partnerships with local organizations such as AZ Fly Shop, and posting flyers at high foot-traffic areas around town.

Paramount is their data collection. They measure pool pH, conductivity, total dissolved solids, and other variables. They continually learn more about the trout and strive to inspire others to care about nature, especially Apache trout.



After decades of conservation efforts, Apache trout, once nearing extinction, have been restored to much of their historic range. They've nearly reached the threshold for the USFWS to delist. This threshold includes sufficient habitat, 30 self-sustaining, discrete populations within their historic range (29 have been met<sup>4</sup> - 17 of which are relict populations.<sup>5,6</sup>), angling regulations, and the establishment of agreements with state agencies to monitor and conserve the species. After delisting, some barriers will be removed, opening up 52 stream miles of Apache Trout habitat. On August 11, 2023 the USFWS proposed delisting Apache Trout.

But threats remain. Although more stream miles will be made available for expansion, the problems with non-native trout remain. Being confined to a narrow range makes the Apache trout particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change such as drought, wildfires, diminished flow and higher water temperatures. Overgrazing and fire suppression have created dense forests which, when coupled with a hotter, drier climate, creates conditions for catastrophic wild fires such as the 2011 Wallow Fire. The monsoon rains

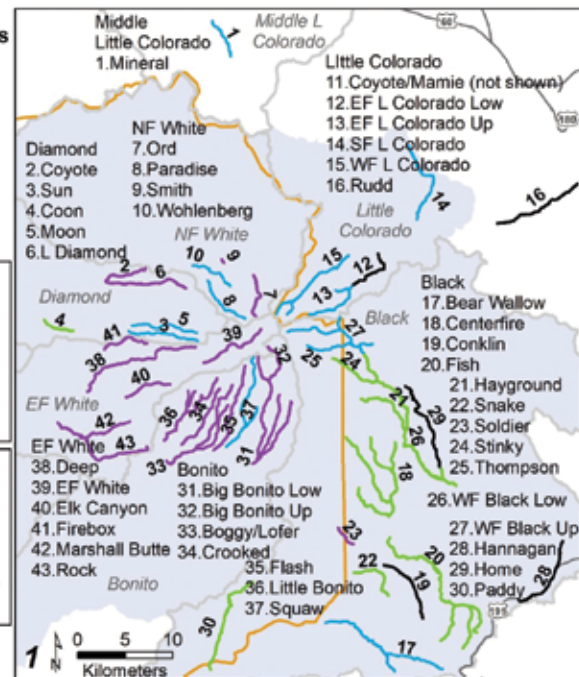
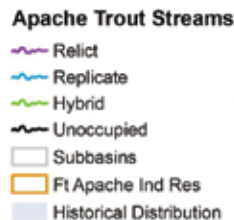
*continued on page 10*



reproduce, locate food, and find refuge from predators. By the mid-1950's, habitat loss and hybridization shrank the Apache trout's range to an estimated 30 stream miles. In 150 years, 96% of Apache trout were gone.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) began conservation efforts in 1955 by closing the headwater streams to fishing. In 1967, the Apache trout was one of 22 fish species listed under the Endangered Species Preservation Act of 1966, the precursor to the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 (50 years old this year.) In 1975, the trout were downlisted to threatened to allow the WMAT to spearhead a recovery plan in collaboration with Arizona Game & Fish (AZGFD),

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service and other partners, free from federal constraints. The plan included removing non-native fish, constructing barriers, and captive breeding at the Williams Creek hatchery in McNary. North Canyon Creek, a tributary of the Colorado River on the Kaibab plateau, was selected to harbor a disjunct population of captive-bred Apache trout for sport fishing.



Maps courtesy of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

that followed that 538,049 acre wildfire directly killed Apache trout from ash and debris flows into Fish Creek, an area that was on track to reopen to anglers. Protective barriers were compromised and streamside vegetation and undercut banks were wiped out, eliminating cover that regulates water temperature and provides refuge. Nutrient-rich run-off from fire-scarred landscapes can lead to algal blooms, eutrophication, and turbidity - all detrimental to the trout and other organisms in these aquatic ecosystems.<sup>7</sup>

impact the trout<sup>3</sup>. Monitoring is not required beyond five years postdelisting. The delisting comment period ended last October. It could take a year for a decision to be made. To read the delisting proposal, species assessment, management plan and more, search USFWS - Apache Trout.

We can be thankful for the progress attained through 68 years of collaborative



The authors resting during sampling in the White Mountains.

We can be thankful for the progress attained through 68 years of collaborative restoration efforts but also know that healthy Apache trout populations require vigilance and continued pressure from concerned citizens.

Delisting could lift regulations including ESA section 4(d) that prohibits certain types of take. It could also eviscerate ESA section 7 requiring federal agencies to consult on activities that may

restoration efforts but also know that healthy Apache trout populations require vigilance and continued pressure from concerned citizens.



Left to right: Lige Kaplan (Frank's dad), Frank Kaplan, and Zac Daitch.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fws.gov/species/apachetrout-oncorhynchus-apache>

<sup>2</sup>W. L. Minckley, 1973, *Fishes of Arizona*, Arizona Game and Fish Department, p. 67

<sup>3</sup>W. L. Minckley, 1991, *Native Fishes of Arid Lands: A Dwindling Resource of the Desert Southwest*, USDA Forest Service, p.9

<sup>4</sup>Noah DeWitt, "Fish and Wildlife Service Proposes Delisting Apache Trout", 08.21.2023

<sup>5</sup><http://westernnativetrout.org/apachetrout/>

<sup>6</sup><https://statesymbolsusa.org/symbol/arizona/state-fish-or-aquatic-life/apachetrout>

<sup>7</sup>[https://westernnativetrout.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/ApacheTrout\\_WesternNativeTroutStatusReport\\_UpdatedJanuary2018.pdf](https://westernnativetrout.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/04/ApacheTrout_WesternNativeTroutStatusReport_UpdatedJanuary2018.pdf)

*Zac Daitch and Frank Kaplan are the co-founders of Arizona's Apache Trout, a project focused on the conservation of the Arizona state fish. They are seniors at Phoenix Country Day School, concentrating on a science-based curriculum.*

The question is sometimes asked if we will ever be able to predict winter finch irruptions. The answer is perhaps. In eastern Canada and the northeastern United States birders, naturalists, and feeder watchers eagerly await the annual Winter Finch Forecast. This forecast attempts to predict which of the winter finch species in the east are likely to irrupt and move south into New England and other eastern states. Because flight years are tied to summer seed and fruit production, estimates of cone crop and winter fruiting tree abundance by a network of observers across eastern north America are used along with other data to compile the forecast. Here in the west, however, our mountainous topography, diverse and widely separated habitats, and lack of observers may make similar prediction efforts more difficult.

For me, it is the very unpredictability of the winter finches that makes them so exciting. I enjoy the mystery of not knowing where they come from or when or where they will appear. I wish to thank Troy Corman who reviewed this article and offered a number of useful comments and suggestions.

For me, it is the very unpredictability of the winter finches that makes them so exciting. I enjoy the mystery of not knowing where they come from or when or where they will appear.

*Charles J Babbitt is a past president of the Maricopa Audubon Society and a past member of the Arizona Bird Committee. He is the author of Birding Arizona: What to Know, Where to Go.*

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE/ ELECTIONS

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:

Elias Esquer (Chair) 480-620-5475 ojo68@cox.net  
James Fillmore (208) 964-9162 james607@aranath.net  
Brian Ison (602) 909-0541 lwrkenai@cox.net

## Help Fund Youth Scholarships

### Donate to the 27TH Herb Fibel Big Sit!

Thanks go out to leaders Kathe Anderson and Cindy Marple and the generous birders who compiled a list of **59 species** last October. Best sightings included a Forster's Tern and Bald Eagle. Donations fund MAS Youth Scholarships including to the AZFO Annual Meeting which are awarded each August. Contact any board member.

**Donate a set amount or per species seen** by cash, check or credit card at a member meeting; online or mail checks payable to "Maricopa Audubon Society" (write "Big Sit" in the memo line) to: MAS Treasurer PO Box 65401 Phoenix, AZ 85082-5401

Donate \$25 or more and receive a **1-year membership** to MAS. If donating by check, write "Auto Join - Big Sit!" in the memo line. Include your mailing address to receive the Cactus Wrendition. If donating online - write "Auto Join - Big Sit!" on Line 4. Additional Information and include a mailing address to receive the Cactus Wrendition.

*FIELD TRIPS, continued from page 5*

looking for winter birds in gorgeous, remote high chaparral - possibly Townsend's Solitaires, Robins, Western Bluebirds, raptors, sparrows, and Crissal Thrashers. Wrap up with a picnic lunch at a park in Anthem. Phoenix meeting place and carpooling TBD. | Time 7:30 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. Difficulty: 2 (uneven footing; no services at the AFNM.)

Covid vaccinations required.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

## GILBERT WATER RANCH

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

Gilbert Water Ranch is a magnet for resident and migrating birds throughout the year. We will scan ponds for waterfowl, pond edges for herons and rails, the paths for desert songbirds, and everywhere for potential rarities. Bring water and snacks, and dress in layers. A spotting scope is helpful. Meet in the main parking area at 2757 E. Guadalupe Rd. Final details and car pooling TBD. | Time: 8 A.M. to Noon | Difficulty: 2 (2 miles on level terrain)

**LEADER: PAUL HEVERAN**

## COON BLUFF, SALT RIVER

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 17

Coon Bluff features cottonwood/willow habitat alongside a fast-moving river. Bald Eagles are a good possibility and we should see a few duck species, other waterbirds, sparrows, warblers and other residents and wintering migrants. Tonto Day Pass required. | Meeting place and details TBD.

Time: 7:30 A.M. to 11 A.M. | Difficulty: 2

**LEADER: BRIAN ISON**

## UPPER BEELINE HIGHWAY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 21

We'll start from Fountain Hills, exploring parts of the old, blocked-off Beeline Highway, mostly along Sycamore Creek. We can hope for a variety of woodpeckers and songbirds, including wrens, titmice, thrushes, sparrows, Mountain Chickadee, Hutton's Vireo, Western Bluebird and Townsend's Solitaire. We'll picnic at Fountain Hills Lake and add some waterfowl to our list. Final details and carpooling TBD. | Time: 6:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. Difficulty: 1 (mostly car birding) | Covid vaccinations required.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

## GLENDALE RECHARGE PONDS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 24

Although these six large SRP basins lack vegetation, the birds they attract make it an exciting hotspot. Shorebirds, other waterfowl, and raptors appear in the winter months. We'll also bird the nearby Agua Fria River. Meet at 107th Ave. one mile north of Camelback. Carpooling and other details TBD.

Time: 6:30 A.M. to 10 A.M. | Difficulty: 2 (2+ mile walk on level ground)

**LEADER: JACOB BAGLEY**

## BIRDS AND BOTANY AT BADGER SPRINGS

TUESDAY, MARCH 5

Explore part of Agua Fria NM 40 miles north of Phoenix. The Monument features many canyons with riparian habitat. We will hike down to the river and back, then drive to Horseshoe Ford for an early lunch. We will view the hillsides, looking for wintering sparrows and other grassland birds. We will review a plant checklist, too! Carpooling and Central Phoenix meeting spot TBD. | Time: 6:00 A.M. - 11:30 A.M. | Difficulty: 2 (moderate trail)

**LEADER: LARRY LANGSTAFF**

## BOX BAR, VERDE RIVER

SATURDAY, MARCH 23

We will walk on fairly level terrain through cottonwood and willows with a brushy understory along the Verde River. Bald Eagles are often seen here, and we should see ducks, other waterbirds, sparrows, warblers, other residents and early spring migrants. Tonto Day Pass required. A meeting place, carpooling, and other trip details TBD. | Time: 6:30 A.M. to 11 A.M.

*Continued on page 18*

# Tales from the field Rim Lakes Field Trip - Aug 14, 2023

Every trip to the Mogollon Rim area begins in Payson's Green Valley Park, with its reliable bathrooms and a couple of ponds to check out before heading elsewhere. In the summer, we



Red-faced Warbler. Photo by Jim Burris

look for the Barn Swallow nests on the back side of visitors' center; in the winter, we scan the ponds for interesting waterfowl. On this trip, the Barn Swallows had fledged, and the ponds held only a handful of **Canada Geese** and a dozen **Mallards** in eclipse plumage.

So we headed east out of town on Route 260, noting gas prices (about \$3.65) for the anticipated fill-up on the way home, and climbed 2,500' to the Mogollon Rim. The road into Woods Canyon Lake skirts the Rim, and the view from the overlooks is breathtaking. It's worth a stop even though we usually don't see many birds at the overlooks - until this time! We didn't even look at the view before a couple of **Dark-eyed Juncos** hopping on the ground caught our attention. Then some **Grace's Warblers** appeared directly overhead low in the ponderosa pines. The soft twittering of small birds turned

out to be some **Pygmy Nuthatches** and warbler chip notes - **Hermit**, **Red-faced** and **Wilson's Warblers**, to be exact. **White-breasted Nuthatches** honked into view as well as a **Mountain Chickadee** and a **Warbling Vireo**. A **Chipping Sparrow** joined the juncos on the ground. The flurry of activity swirled around us for several minutes, then moved on.

We finally took in the view, watching traffic wind its way up Route 260, just as we had. The rolling green hills stretched to the horizon, almost entirely uninterrupted by any form of human interference - lush and dark despite the unrelenting heat and limited rain of the summer. It was only then that we realized how chilly it was - to Valley of the Sun desert rats like us. The car thermometer registered 67 degrees and it never got to 70 all morning under overcast skies. Just as we turned to leave for the



Warbling Vireo. Photo by Pierre Deviche

**Bald Eagle** sat imperiously on a snag on the other side of the lake, while an **Osprey** or two coursed the lake on improbably long wings. **Acorn Woodpeckers** were easy to see; not so much the **Hairy Woodpeckers**. The hoped-for Lewis's Woodpecker that surprised us last time was missing. Except for a **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, we apparently exhausted our warbler quota at our first stop. At the spillway, we

were hoping for possible robins and something interesting in the different, almost marshy habitat. Nothing. On the way back, we added a lone vocal **American Crow** to our list. A **Hermit Thrush** played hide-and-seek in front of us, while cheeky **Goldenmantled Ground Squirrels** scurried about boldly all along the path.

Deciding to avoid possible construction delays getting to Willow Springs Lake, we headed

back towards cheap gas and picnic lunch in warmer Payson. We dropped off the Rim and the temperature rose 15 degrees. While our species list wasn't extraordinarily long, it included some favorites and sought-after birds, lifers for a couple of participants. What was remarkable to me was how many people missed this trip!



Steller's Jay. Photo by Lyndie Mason Warner

rest of our journey, a **Painted Redstart** arrived to send us off.

At Woods Canyon Lake, we strolled the path that follows the south side of the lake and ends near the spillway. **Steller's Jays** greeted us and accompanied us most of the route. A huge

By Kathe Anderson

Despite registration being full, with a wait list, only four of us actually went. For those who think it's not worth getting on the wait list, this is a perfect example of its value! The online list fills up, but I keep auxiliary lists in addition, and use them regularly. I wish more folks could have experienced that wonderful mixed flock of songbirds at our first stop and the awe of the magnificent raptors at the lake. Maybe next time!

*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.*



Hermit Thrush. Photo by Pierre Deviche

Despite registration being full, with a wait list, only four of us actually went. For those who think it's not worth getting on the wait list, this is a perfect example of its value!

## New Record for Maricopa County: **Great-crested Flycatcher**



On 23 September 2023, **Dale Clark** found a **Great-crested Flycatcher** at Riggs and Price Roads ponds in Chandler. This is the 468th species for the county. The flycatcher was last seen 24 September 2023.



Photos by Gordon Karre  
Recorder: Janet Witzeman

# BOOK REVIEW

by Charles Babbitt

## WHAT AN OWL KNOWS: THE NEW SCIENCE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ENIGMATIC BIRDS.

BY JENNIFER ACKERMAN

Penguin Press, 2023, 333 pages

Hardcover list \$ 30.00, also available as Kindle, Audiobook and paperback

Arizona has more owl species than just about any other state. In fact, southeastern Arizona, with its varied and unique habitats, is a globally recognized hot spot of owl diversity. For people wanting to learn more about owls, *What An Owl Knows* is a fascinating book that delves into many aspects of the physiology and behavior of these mysterious birds.

This is Jennifer Ackerman's latest in a series of wellreceived books about birds. It is well researched with much of the information derived from her own field observations and interviews with leading owl researchers. She discusses new scientific theories, ongoing research and cutting-edge

technology which are providing us with a deeper understanding of some of the things that make an owl an owl: silent flight, exceptional hearing, and remarkable vision.

Neuroscientists, for example, have discovered that Barn Owls utilize their brain's hippocampus to build mental maps of their surroundings while in flight making it possible to navigate in near total darkness. The asymmetrical ears of Great Gray Owls help them seize prey by using sound to compute

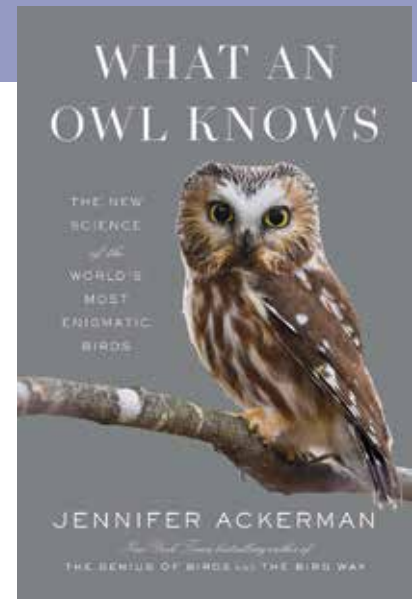


Photo by Lyndie Mason Warner



*Fifty Years  
of the*

## Endangered Species Act

1973-2023

## Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl Relisted

The Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy Owl has recently been added to the list of threatened and endangered species under the Endangered Species Act. Initially listed in 1997, the owl was subsequently delisted during the Bush administration under pressure from developers. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has once again determined that the owl is threatened throughout Arizona, Texas and several Mexi-

can states. In Arizona, this small cavity-nesting owl is threatened by urbanization and the invasion of buffleggrass\* which spreads fire that destroys the columnar cacti and other Sonoran Desert habitat the owl needs.

- Charles Babbitt

\*See CW Summer 2022, pp. 18-20.

## Autumn Silence By David Chorlton

He's so handsome in the way he rests  
on the railing back  
of the tree that hides him  
from finches, flicker, and the doves  
busy eating. The hawk floats

on the blind side of the smaller birds  
and when he lands daylight  
passes through him. Even the sky  
doesn't know where he is.  
A pacifist on Sunday radio  
talks about the knife attack that made her  
renounce what she believed.  
Turning to display the sweep

his markings take  
from the point at the tip of his beak  
along his juvenile breast to  
the bands ladderred  
on the tail, he's close to tree bark,  
to boughs or subterfuge. I had to react,

*I would not be talking to you now . . .*

There comes a flash  
of plumage, switchblade-quick  
and the birds in chorus  
quickly disperse, leaving the elegant  
wingspread to sweep away from

the yard as October's shadow  
feeding on the sun.

the azimuth and elevation of small mammals hidden under the snow. The link between sound and pupil dilation observed in owls has even led to new tests to detect hearing loss in human babies.

Technology and new survey techniques are helping researchers find and locate endangered owl species. Drones and satellites search for unfrozen water in rivers and lakes frequented in winter by rare Blackiston's Fish Owls, the world's largest owl. Owl pellet-smelling dogs have been trained to survey for Northern Spotted Owls in California's vast Sierra Nevada and find highly endangered Tasmanian Masked Owls. Much owl research however, remains low tech, slow and painstaking. The author describes bushwhacking through Grizzly Bear country in Montana looking for the broken snags used by nesting Great Gray Owls and laboriously dragging fields looking for Shorteared Owl nests.

Owl migration remains one of the most fascinating yet least understood aspects of owl behavior. My favorite chapter is the author's discussion of the When, Why and Where of owl migration. Snowy Owls, for instance, use many migration strategies. They often move great distances in the arctic in search of lemmings and nesting areas with one radio tagged individual traveling 2,500 miles. In winter they occasionally irrupt southward into the United States but, oddly enough, some fly north into the darkness of the arctic night to prey on sea ducks in open waters. Northern Saw-whet Owl migrations are also complicated. Migrations are irregular and unpredictable with some birds migrating and others remaining on home territories. Those that do migrate move slowly. According to one expert cited by the author they migrate a paltry 15 miles a day. Flammulated Owls, on the other hand, waste no time leaving western pine forests and can travel 190 miles a day to wintering grounds in central and southern Mexico. Why the difference in pace the author asks? Flammulated Owls are insectivores. This book is informative and entertaining. Jennifer Ackerman writes with an easy-to-read, engaging style that helps us to more fully understand and appreciate these enigmatic birds.

*Charles Babbitt is MAS Conservation Chair and author of Birding Arizona: What to Know, Where to Go*

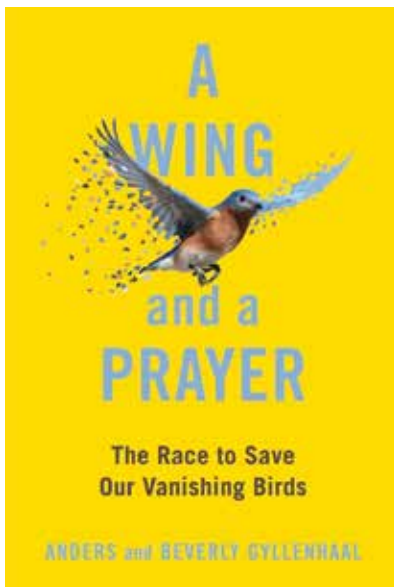


Immature Cooper's Hawk. Photo by Rich Ditch

# BOOK REVIEWS

by Tom Gatz

Birds in North America have declined by 30% in the last 50 years. For my summer reading, I consumed two recently published books recommended by my friend, Henry, that address the decline of our birds and efforts and research needed to reverse some of those declines. Both books were researched and written during the COVID pandemic, both deal with some of the same issues and the authors even interview and quote many of the same people in their respective books. Despite this overlap, and maybe because of it, I think it's worth reading them both. *A Wing and a Prayer* focuses on current and needed actions to reverse the drastic decline in our bird numbers. While *Flight Paths* focuses on the amazing tools currently being used to track bird migration which is helping to determine what areas are most important for bird conservation.



## A WING AND A PRAYER

Anders and Beverly Gyllenhaal

Simon and Schuster, 2023, 310 pages

Hardcover list \$ 30.00, also available in Kindle, Audiobook, and CD.

It's coming in on a wing and a prayer!" was a line from the 1942 WW II movie, *Flying Tigers* starring John Wayne. That was the air controller's response when asked if the damaged aircraft that was inbound with a shredded tail and one engine out was

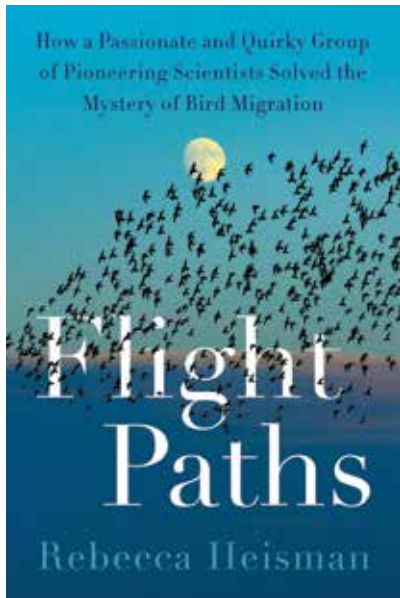
what this country spends on soft drinks each year. Some of the current and proposed bird recovery methods are creative, others are drastic and some border on brutal. Some seem like they might be working. I worry that, without determining the actual cause of the declines and/or without restoring habitat, some of the efforts described are unlikely to make a difference. For example, while the authors don't pass judgement, trying to genetically resurrect the extinct Passenger Pigeon without restoring its habitat (if that were even feasible) sounds like money down the drain to me. Restoration and protection of habitat on both sides of the border is the main 'take home message'. As the authors put it "migrating (warblers), like kids bouncing between two homes, need financial support from both parents." Grassland birds have taken some of the biggest hits. Eastern

going to make it home and it pretty much sums up the message of this book. Written by two former newspaper journalists, this book will open your eyes to the plight of our North American birds and the Herculean drastic efforts needed to address it. Traveling across the country including to Hawaii (the extinction capital of the world), the authors visit many sites where valiant efforts are being attempted to reverse the declines in every group of birds except waterfowl. Only a few "I think we are out of the woods" examples were found. The amazing way bald eagles bounced back once DDT was outlawed was one, although new studies now show high levels of lead in half of the Bald and Golden eagles tested in 38 states. No one knows why Evening Grosbeaks declined by over 90 percent and why Great Blue Herons and American Kestrels are declining. Habitat loss, predation by free-roaming cats, and window kills were some of the top reasons listed for this loss of 3 billion birds in recent years. However, too often the causes of decline are either unknown, or the effort and capital needed to reverse the declines would likely not be acceptable to many voters. One estimate given of the funds needed to make a real difference was \$1.23 billion a year. Sounds like a lot, right? But that's only about 20 percent of

One estimate given of the funds needed to make a real difference was \$1.23 billion a year. Sounds like a lot, right? But that's only about 20 percent of what this country spends on soft drinks each year.

Meadowlarks are down about 75 percent; again, likely due to habitat loss. In recent years, the U.S. has lost more prairie than the Brazilian Amazon has lost rainforest. According to interviews conducted by the authors with former mid- and upper-level U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees (my old job), that agency has largely dropped the ball on bird conservation because of funding restrictions and heavy political pressure. It now takes the agency an average of 12 years to even add a species to the Endangered Species list. Current agency managers largely declined to be interviewed. The authors end with encouragement on things we can do to help: everything from ways to prevent bird/window collisions to asking the experienced birders to be more like welcoming ambassadors and less like snobby know-it-alls to potential new birders.





## Flight Paths: How a Passionate and Quirky Group of Pioneering Scientists Solved the Mystery of Bird Migration

By Rebecca Heisman

Harper, 2023, 267 pages

Hardcover list \$ 24.00, also available in Kindle, Audiobook, and CD.

For me, this book was a real “page-turner”, explaining all the latest bird tracking technology in almost detective novel fashion. Addressing what could be very dry subjects, the

that determine a bird’s location by the position of the sun, researchers found that, in miles traveled per ounce of weight, the tiny Blackpoll Warbler (the weight of an AAA battery) is one of the world’s greatest travelers, flying 1400 miles over open ocean for three days and nights. She tells us we don’t fully understand why migrating birds are attracted to often fatal bright lights on buildings. It turns out that even feather analysis is useful in determining where a bird was hatched and where it has been recently.

author, a science writer, translates the technical jargon for us into a very readable account of how biologists are using tools and expertise of scientists and engineers from many other disciplines to study bird migration. The author starts with bird-banding (and she exposes Audubon for likely exaggerating the results of his early bird-banding efforts) and tells us about the bird-tracking antenna attached to the International Space Station (that was until the invasion of Ukraine occurred and the Russians stopped it). Based on data from tiny, pumpkin seed-sized sensors

And if you are even thinking about not submitting a list of birds from your next outing on eBird the author reminds us how critical our bird sightings are to monitoring current and future changes in our bird populations. - Tom Gatz

And if you are even thinking about not submitting a list of birds from your next outing on eBird, the author reminds us how critical our bird sightings are to monitoring current and future changes in our bird populations.

*Tom Gatz, retired from the USFWS, is a longtime MAS member.*



25th Annual Gila River Indian Community

## Winter Bird Count and Cultural Event

Saturday, December 2, 2023

**7:00 am**

**Meet at the location nearest you to receive your field assignment:**

- 1. Gila River Interpretive Trail** (MAR-5) Olberg Rd. just south of the Gila River Bridge (continuation north of Hi. 187)
- 2. Casa Blanca Chevron Station** ¼ mile west of I-10 off the Exit 175
- 3. Komatke Chevron Station** 17197 51st Ave, Laveen Village, AZ 85339 (51st Ave. and W. Pecos Rd)
- 4. D7 Service Center** 8035 S 83rd Ave, Laveen Village, AZ 85339 (W. Baseline and 83rd Ave.)

**11:00 am**

**Cultural Activities Begin**

**Huhugam Heritage Center**

23159 S. Maricopa Rd.

Chandler, AZ (east of Maricopa Rd. and north of Hi.347 (E. Queen Creek Rd.)

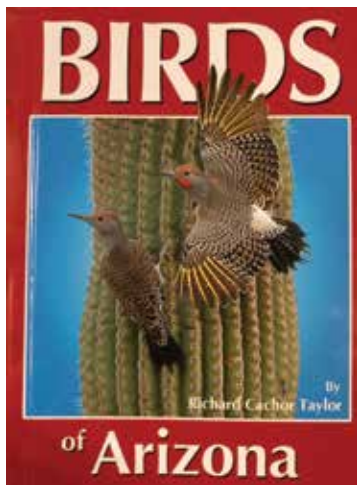
**1 pm: Bird Count Concludes**

Visit <https://www.gricdeq.org/winter-bird-count> for more information.

This is a rare opportunity to share your knowledge and joy of birding with the youth (and adults) of the GRIC!

# BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Gatz



## Birds of Arizona

Richard Cachor Taylor  
R. W. Morse Company, 2022. pp. 494 pp.  
Paperback list \$ 26.96

When a friend recently asked me what book I would recommend for his young daughter, a fledgling birder, my first instinct was to recommend *The Sibley Guide to Birds*, considered by many to be the birders “Bible”. Then I remembered this new, just for Arizona, field guide had recently been published. There

is no sense in overwhelming a new birder with the over 900 species of North American birds pictured in *Sibley* when she can start to flex her wings with just those species found here in Arizona in Taylor’s almost pocket-sized guide. *Birds of Arizona* covers 500+ species so even the seasoned birder will find helpful differentiations of the less common and even the rarest of species, provided they have already been documented in Arizona. It is also a testament to the diversity of the avifauna of Arizona, with over 50% of the birds found north of Mexico right here in the state where we live. Even if you are a pro and rarely need a field guide to identify most species, this little guide has very good (if somewhat complicated) seasonal range maps, specific to Arizona, with three major cities on each map to help orient you. Additionally, and what I think I like best, are the “Noteworthy” comments that Taylor provides for most species. Even an old timer like me learned a lot of interesting things from these fun facts. Here are just a few of them:

- Redhead ducks frequently lay eggs in other ducks’ nests; about half of all Redhead ducklings have foster parents.
- Winter precipitation determines quail abundance the following spring.
- Mourning Doves are often considered the most abundant breeding bird in Arizona.
- In southern Arizona, Roadrunners often nest twice; once in the spring and again during the monsoons.
- If migration distance is divided by body size, the 2000-mile journey of Rufous Hummingbirds is one of the greatest in the animal kingdom.
- Green Herons are known to drop small objects into the water to attract fish to eat.
- During winter, it is estimated that about four Red-tailed Hawks per mile occur along valley highways in Arizona.
- The tiny Ladder-backed Woodpecker usually excavates nest cavities on the underside of branches or “lean” side of agave stalks.
- Our resident Black-tailed Gnatcatchers typically nest in mistletoe clumps.
- The distribution of Verdins in Arizona is almost identical to the range of mesquite.

Ed. note: This book was also reviewed by Jelena Grbic, in the Spring 2023 CW. Both Jelena’s and Tom’s angles on this guide are worth sharing.

*Field trips, continued from page 11*

Difficulty: 2 (moderate trail)

**LEADER: BRIAN ISON**

### MONTEZUMA’S WELL

THURSDAY, MARCH 28

This trip features both the Well with its pond and high desert habitat, and the sycamore riparian picnic area, at about 3,400’. We should see a variety of chaparral and high desert species, including titmice, wrens, thrushes, possible early migrating warblers or vireos,

and waterfowl at the pond. Plan to picnic at the Monument. Scottsdale meeting spot and carpooling TBD. | Time: 6:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Difficulty: 2 (uneven footing and rock stairs) Covid vaccinations required.

**LEADER: KATHE ANDERSON**

### TRES RIOS OVERBANK WETLANDS

SATURDAY, MARCH 30

Winter waterfowl may include Wood Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, and

Common Merganser. Other possibilities include Sora, Wilson’s Snipe, Red-naped Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, White-throated Sparrow, Black-and-white Warbler, and Northern Parula. Park SE of the Wetlands off 91st Ave. | Time: 6:30 A.M. to 11 A.M. | Difficulty: 2 (2 mile walk on level ground)

**LEADER: JACOB BAGLEY**

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers throughout the Western Hemisphere go afield between December 14 and January 5 to record every individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle on that day. These records comprise an extensive database of winter bird populations and overall health of the environment. Participants are typically assigned to teams based on bird identification skills and endurance. To learn more about counting, search Youtube for Arizona Field Ornithologist's excellent CBC workshop.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Date	Day	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	Email*
12/14/23	Th	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-585-1606	kurtrad at mexicobirding.com
12/14/23	Th	Bill Williams River NWR	Jessica Samuelson	928-271-0253	jessica_samuelson at fws.gov
12/14/23	Th	Tucson Valley	Keith Kamper	520-495-9564	keithkamper at gmail.com
12/14/23	Th	Patagonia	Donna Edmonds	719-369-9704	dymonds2015 at gmail.com
12/15/23	Fr	Sedona	Richard Armstrong	928-282-3675	richarmstrong47 at gmail.com
12/15/23	Fr	Havasu NWR	Marge Penton	928-201-0619	malgaep at gmail.com
12/16/23	Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Nancy Meister	928-782-3552	yaspresident at yahoo.com
12/16/23	Sa	Hassayampa River	Chrissy Kondrat	623-451-1250	ckondrat at azgfd.gov
12/16/23	Sa	Avra Valley	George Montgomery	520-609-0245	gmontgomery at desertmuseum.org
12/16/23	Sa	Nogales	Bill Lisowsky	520-987-0187	ykwosil at gmail.com
12/16/23	Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Kendall Kroesen	520-971-2385	kendallkroesen at gmail.com
12/16/23	Sa	Safford	Diane Drobka	928-298-0004	sunnylaz at yahoo.com
12/17/23	Su	Ramsey Canyon	Steven Tracey	408-966-3860	stracey53 at yahoo.com
12/17/23	Su	Phoenix-Metro	Kathy Balman	678-457-0802	nerdyforbirdies at gmail.com
12/17/23	Su	Grand Canyon	Brian Gatlin	928-638-7723	brian_gatlin at nps.gov
12/17/23	Su	Jerome	Rob Gibbs	240-780-1318	robgibbs54 at gmail.com
12/20/23	We	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	tomoff at northlink.com
12/21/23	Th	Gila River	Sharon Lashway	480-324-3541	slashway at azgfd.gov
12/21/23	Th	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta	Alfredo Soto	520-560-0555	alfredo at soto@fws.gov
12/22/23	Fr	Organ Pipe Cactus NM	Samantha Gillette	520 387-6849	samantha_gillette at nps.gov
12/22/23	Fr	Lukeville	Samantha Gillette	521 387-6849	samantha_gillette at nps.gov
12/23/23	Sa	Saint David	Heather Swanson	520-307-4405	SPRNCABird at hotmail.com
12/26/23	Tu	Superior	Joy Bell	480-760-1393	joyabell at yahoo.com
12/28/23	Th	Tres Rios	Marceline VandeWater	602-689-4356	marceline at ermaroni.net
12/29/23	Fr	Carefree	Jen Bruening	480-239-2917	jen at mcdowellsonoran.org
12/29/23	Fr	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	John Wilson	928-457-8282	jgwilson1954 at gmail.com
12/30/23	Sa	Portal	Bonnie Bowen	520-558-0038	Bonnie.Bowen at gmail.com
12/30/23	Sa	Atascosa Highlands	Jake Mohlmann	610-390-2424	mohlmann2 at yahoo.com
12/30/23	Sa	Timber Mesa	Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481	rhilbe739 at gmail.com
01/02/24	Tu	Camp Verde	Kay Hawklee	432-703-0007	khawklee at gmail.com
01/02/24	Tu	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	dougenness at gmail.com
01/03/24	We	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-240-3737	
01/04/23	Th	Lake Pleasant	Eric Hough	28-684-2772	
01/04/24	Th	Payson	David Hallock	928-474-9475	
01/05/24	Fr	Appleton-Whittell	Suzanne Wilcox	520-455-5522	
TBA	We	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267	
TBA	Sa	Tonto NM - Roosevelt Lake	Aaron O'Neal		
TBA	Mo	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-925-5567	
TBA	Fr	Willow Beach	Clayton Merrill	702-371-7548	
TBA		Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Dave Griffin		

For updates, visit the MAS website - Events - Christmas Bird Count

# Celebrating 70 years of Maricopa Audubon Society

## Some things change...

Interesting sightings from 1955!

April 1955

### Starlings Found Nesting

On a trip made to McDonald's River Ranch April 10, three pair of Starlings were observed nesting there (J.R.Werner, J.T.Bialac).

The nests were on the east end of the ranch. They were all located in abandoned Woodpecker holes, approximately 30 feet from the ground in large, live Cottonwood Trees.

The parent birds were observed entering two of the nesting cavities with food and leaving, and the young birds could be heard calling in the nest.

The parent birds were very wary and would not enter the nest with anyone in sight.

This is not the first nesting record of these birds here, but is quite interesting.

February 1955

### Great-tailed Grackle Seen Near Picacho Reservoir

Fifteen members of the Maricopa Audubon Society made the field trip to Picacho Reservoir February 20.

The only birds sighted on the mud flats here were 4 Kildeer. On the way out the group stopped along the ditch bank where a number of birds were seen, 33 species in all. The most interesting was a Great-tailed Grackle, feeding at the edge of an irrigated field with a large flock of Pipits. Also seen were a Yellowthroat, three Ravens, four Ground Doves, and a Mountain Bluebird at Casa Grande on the return trip. Abe Margolin was in charge.

### Bald Eagle Extinction Predicted For 2,005

According to a recent article in the Phoenix papers a well-known man who has made a study of Eagles has predicted that the Bald Eagle will soon be extinct. He says that by the year 2,005 the United States will have no National Bird.

This is merely a prediction, but it should be taken seriously for it would be a great shame to cause this great bird to disappear.

In 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated 23,518 occupied breeding Bald Eagle territories in the U.S. including Alaska.

*- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Bald and Golden Eagles  
Population Demographics, 2016*



The Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch Program was started by Maricopa Audubon Society and the U.S. Forest Service in 1978 to monitor one endangered Desert Nesting Bald Eagle nest. Sixty one Bald Eagles fledged from seventy three occupied breeding areas across Arizona in 2022.

Ten-week-old eaglet questions mother about mealtime.

Photo by Laurie Nessel

...some things remain the same.

# THE ROADRUNNER NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT. WHY DON'T YOU HELP?

We, the staff of the ROADRUNNER intend to publish this paper once a month.

If you have any information; articles or stories on birds, conservation, or wildlife; interesting sight records; bird studies; data on field excursions or any other interesting material please send it to the Editor,

Your help will be greatly appreciated.

# THE ROADRUNNER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE MARICOPA AUDUBON SOCIETY

Volume I Phoenix, Arizona, December, 1954 Number 8

December 1954. First MAS Christmas Bird Counts

## Christmas Census Success In Spite Of 30mph Wind; 71 Species Recorded

Monday, December 27, 15 members of the Maricopa Audubon Society participated in a Christmas Bird Census in a circle with a 7½ mile radius centering on Osborn Rd. and Lateral 21½, west of Phoenix.

Beginning at 7:00 in the morning they split into two groups, one taking the north half of the circle and the other the south. They concluded at 5:45 p.m.

The highest temperature that day was 50° and there were 30 to 40 m.p.h. winds. Ice could still be found on the farm ponds at 11:30 in the morning.

The recorded weather was reported to be the coldest in 13 years! However the winds brought in great numbers of Ducks including 6094 Pintails, 1295 Mallards and 392 Shovellers.

Also observed along Olive Road were the American Roughleg and the Sennett's White Tailed Hawk, the latter having been recorded only once in Arizona, and that record is in question. (Cont. P. 2)

1969-2009

## 40 Years Compiling Field Observations

by Janet Witzeman

### September 1969 Janet Witzeman starts her Field Observation reports

#### FIELD OBSERVATIONS...

May 4 - Bix Demaree saw two Black Vultures on South 51st Ave. near St. John's Indian Mission.

May 6 & 7 - Eleanor Radke reported that large flocks of Violet Green Swallows passed through Cave Creek.

May 8 - Fred Miller saw 28 Forster's Terns at the Sun City Sewage Pond.

May 10 - Bix Demaree reported that the Avocet nest at the 35th Ave. Pond was flooded out.

May 16 - Bix Demaree and Eleanor Radke found a Zone-tailed Hawk nest at Camp Creek, the same day they saw an Elf Owl in Rackensack Gulch.

May 31 - Bix Demaree reported a late Avocet, four Snowy Egrets and three young Stilts at the 35th Ave. Pond.

June 18 - Bix Demaree and Eleanor Radke found a Gray Vireo at Seven Springs. It has not been reported in Seven Springs before. They also found a nesting Bush Tit at Rackensack Gulch, a Black Phoebe with young and a nesting Bewick's Wren at Camp Creek; a Bridled Titmouse feeding young, and a nesting Western Wood Peewee at Seven Springs. There was at least one young Zone-tailed Hawk in the nest at Camp Creek. They also saw a Bell's Vireo feeding a baby Cowbird.

In early June, 5 members of MAS took part in a breeding bird census conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Demarees did a census for 25 miles on the road from Zenia to northeast of Heber. Bob Norton's census was 25 miles from east of Snowflake to Hunt. The Witzeman's 25 mile census was on the road from House Rock (near Jacob Lake) north toward the Utah border. This was the second year this census has been conducted in the West.  
Janet Witzeman

71 species

and 18,727 individuals were seen.

The second area was a 15 mile circle including Coon's Bluff Granite Reef Dam, Blue Point, Stewart Mountain Dam, and points on the Verde including Ft McDowell 58 species were seen.

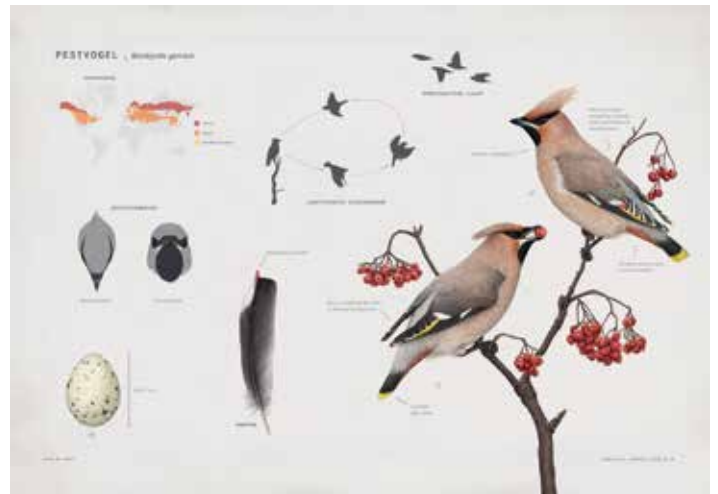


Nature Through the Artist's Eye

# J o r i s D e R a e d t

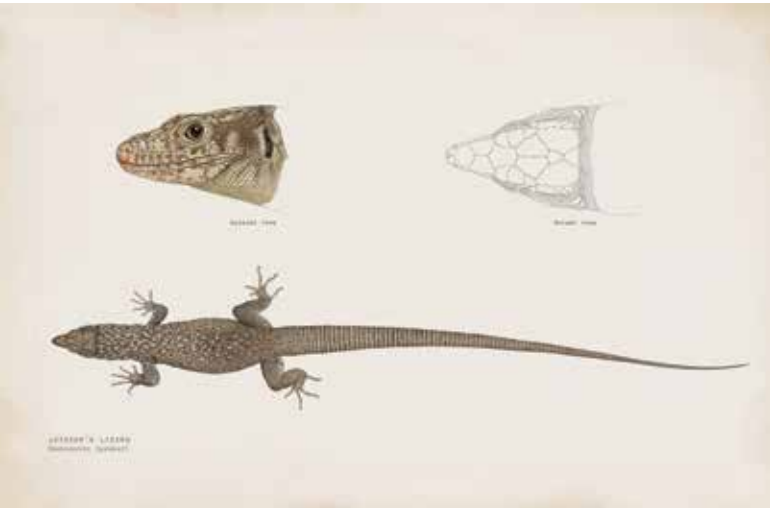


Joris De Raedt is a scientific illustrator, graphic designer and wildlife artist from Belgium. For over ten years he has worked full time as a freelance illustrator of books and stamps for nature reserves, magazines, publishers and on private commissions.



Clockwise from top left: Crested Caracara, plate from the book *Roofvogels De Mooiste en Machtigste Dieren in de Lucht* (Birds of Prey - The Most Beautiful and Powerful Animals in the Sky); Pestvogel (Bohemian Waxwing); Jayakar Lizard; Fulvous Whistling Duck; Black Tern; Wetland Skyline, Wasit Wetland Center, Sharjah, UAE.





His interest in the natural world was sparked from a very early age. Every school holiday Joris was out in nature with his parents and their friends: camping, exploring and discovering new areas to observe flora and fauna.

De Raedt works from nature, observing animals in their natural habitat and keeping a journal with field sketches which capture their essence. Using a graphic tablet, he developed his own digital drawing technique in a style that pays homage to naturalists of the 19th century.



To see more of Joris's work and subscribe to his newsletter: [jorisderaedt.com](http://jorisderaedt.com)

Follow him @jorisderaedt

Write him at [info@jorisderaedt.com](mailto:info@jorisderaedt.com)



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## MONTHLY MEETING

Please see meeting information on page 4 or [maricopaaudubon.org](http://maricopaaudubon.org). For questions or speaker suggestions, contact a board member.

## TWO WAYS TO JOIN AND RECEIVE THE CACTUS WREN•DITION

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 President (right). All Friends memberships now renew annually each year on April 1st. Subscriptions are pro-rated.

## SUBMISSIONS

Copy for The Cactus Wren•dition must be received 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 feature a theme. Feel free to enquire and take the theme into account. Editor: Laurie Nessel [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

## OPINIONS

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

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