



The Cactus Wren-Dition

Winter, 2001-2002 • Volume XLIX, No. 6



Cooper's Hawk (Juvenile) photographed by **Jim Burns** at Mesquite Wash 10/01 with Canon EOS A2 body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens, and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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PROGRAMS

Meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month, September-April, at the Phoenix Zoo Auditorium. Meetings start at 7:30, and feature a speaker, book sales, refreshments, and a chance to socialize with fellow MAS members. Non-members welcome!

Join us for a pre-meeting dinner at Pete's 19th Tee, 1405 N Mill Avenue, Tempe (at the Rolling Hills Golf Course) starting at 6:00 p.m.

PROGRAM TOPICS

November 6: Bob Stewart: butterflies: Their relationships to and interaction with other life forms. Bob will sell and sign copies of his new book - *Butterflies of Arizona*.

December 4: Roseann Hanson: natural history author and executive director of southern Sky Island Alliance, will give a talk about the Alliance's Wildlife Monitoring Program. The monitoring program is unique approach to conserving wildlife corridors using "citizen scientist" volunteers to gather data on regularly monitored transects. Phase I of the program centers around corridors between the San Pedro River and the Dragoon and Whetstone Mountains. She will also bring copies of and talk briefly about her new natural history guide to the Sand Pedro River, published in September by the UA Press

January 8: Doug Alexander topic: TBA

February 5: Gunnar Engblom, a biologist and scientific coordinator for a Peruvian NGO called Ecosistemas Andinos

(ECOAN). His passion is bird conservation especially Polylepis forests near Cosco. He will talk about his treks into un-birded areas, his discovery of a new wren species and the first sighting of a rare Tinamou after 100 years.

March 5: Dr. David L. Pearson, professor of biology at ASU. His topic will be Why are there more bird species some places than others?

April 2: Madhusudan Kattie from the ASU LTER project will speak on the birds and wildlife conservation of India.

May 7: Dr. Bob Ohmart, Professor of Biology at ASU will Speak on the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge - Tantalizing and Undiscovered Jewel.

Speakers wanted: If you have ideas for speakers, or if you would like to make a presentation yourself, please contact Laurie Nessel, Program Chair, at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@hotmail.com

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Field Trip Chairman Needed - Mike Baker has taken a job out of state. This vacates the Field Trip chairman position. If you are interested, please contact a Board Member.

Rio Grande Valley Birding Festival will be held November 14-18, 2001 in Harlingen, TX. For information, call 800/531-7346 or www.rgvbirdfest.com.

Wings Over Willcox Festival is January 18-20—This 9th annual event is built around the Sandhill Cranes that winter by the thousands in the Sulphur Springs Valley. The schedule includes full and half-day field trips to find wintering cranes, hawks shorebirds and passerines. Field trip fees vary. Contact the Willcox Chamber of Commerce & Agriculture sponsoring organization for additional information at 800-200-2272 / www.wingsoverwillcox.com

ABA Regional Conference in Miami, FL, January 18-22, 2002. Bird the Everglades and Loxahatchee NWR. For more information call 800/850-2473 ext 233.

Friday-Sunday April 19-21 Yuma Birding Nature Festival—April 19-21. Contact: Yuma Convention & Visitor's Bureau at 800-293-0071 or www.visitityuma.com

Friday-Sunday April 27-29 Verde Valley Birding Festival—April 27-29. Contact: Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce at 520-282-2202 or cottonwoodchamber@sedona.net

Annual ABA Convention in Duluth, MN, June 10-16, 2002. Information to follow

More birding and nature festivals. www.americanbirding.org

Audubon Adventures: Give the gift of discovery and share your love of the environment. The program is designated for students in grades 4-6. Introduce an entire classroom (up to 32 students) to the wonders of nature for just \$35 (plus shipping charges). You can select your favorite school or let Audubon do it for you. For orders: call 800/813-5037.

Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts are available for sale at member meetings or by mail. They feature a Barn Owl primary flight feather overshadowing the common and Latin names of birds found in Maricopa County. Long-sleeved shirts are available in Charcoal, Med, Large or XL, for \$20.00. Add \$4.00 shipping and handling for the first shirt, \$1.50 for each additional shirt. Please allow 3 weeks for delivery. Make checks out to: Maricopa Audubon Society, 1128 E Geneva Dr., Tempe, AZ 85282. For info, contact Laurie Nessel at (480) 968-5614 or laurienessel@hotmail.com

Do you have an interesting story to tell about birding? Please forward your **submissions** to the Editor—Deva Burns. Check the back page for address/e-mail. Actually, attaching an article to an e-mail is the absolute easiest way to submit an article. If you have pictures or slides, you do need to send those to me directly. Remember, all articles may not be published the first month after receipt.

From The Editor

By Deva Burns

Events & Programs

Notes & Announcements

BIRDATHON 2001

COMMITTEES/SUPPORT

Activist Alert:

Shawn Bauer
602-828-3607

shawnbauer@hotmail.com

Arizona Audubon
Council Rep:

Herb Fibel
408-966-5246

herbertsfibel@aol.com

Bird Alert

Book Store

Richard & Karen Kaiser
602-276-3312

Field Observations

Janet Witzeman
602-840-6089

Hospitality

Janine Baker

Web Page

Michell Fulton
480-968-5141

webmaster@maricopaaudubon.org

Maricopa Audubon Web Site

www.maricopaaudubon.org

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 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.

As you may or may not have noticed, we have switched to the 4 issues per year beginning with this issue. For no particular reason, other than it is convenient, I have called this the Winter issue. Thus, the next issue will be Spring and so on.

Do you use those increasingly popular 2-way radios while birding in the field? Their use has grown significantly in the past couple years. So much so, the ABA committee has felt it necessary to issue FRS (Family Radio Service) guidelines for birders. Channel 11, subcode 22 has been recommended as a continent-wide standard for communication by birders in the field. The advantages for this one channel for birders are numerous, the main one being the ability to monitor the channel for the location of birds (rare or otherwise) by parties other than you immediate group. It is also recommended that if you need to discuss something other than birds, you switch to another channel and or subcode. Ultimately, as in the ABA Code of Birding Ethics, common sense should always be at the forefront. If you would like more information, please go to the ABA website: www.americanbirding.org

Be sure you check out the [Christmas Bird Count](#) list in the back. Several of the counts did not have their dates decided before the *Wren•dition* deadline. However, all of the counts have a compiler with phone number and an e-mail address if they have one. Did you know there was such a thing as a Thanksgiving Bird Count? I didn't until I received a letter from Dr. John G. Hewston. also, in Notes and Announcements, there are listed numerous birding festivals with a website to look for more.

I hope you enjoy this issue. Additionally, I hope you can make time to take part in festivals, birdathons, or bird counts. The events of September 11 affected me profoundly. I have found that thinking again about the *When•dition* and birding has relieved some of the stress of that horrific day. I would encourage you to also try for the normalcy that our feathered friends can provide. Finally, I hope you flood my e-mail with your winter birding tales for the Spring issue.

Sirena Brownlee is the winner of the 2001 Birdathon. She raised \$265.00 which won her a 2 night stay at Beatty's Bed and Breakfast in Miller Canyon. An anonymous gift of \$2,000.00 brought the grand total of funds raised to \$2,265.00. A second prize from the Santa Rita Lodge in Madera Canyon went unclaimed. That the Birdathon could have had a better organization and membership involvement is a gross understatement. I take full responsibility for this and with the experience of 2001 under my belt and with you help, I will endeavor to make 2002 a better birdathon year. With our dues share from National Audubon being cut, it is more important than ever that we have a successful birdathon next spring. Funds raised for Maricopa Audubon are needed for a wide variety of purposes, including publishing and mailing out the *Wren•dition*, education conservation, guest speakers, and an annual donation to the Zoo for allowing us to hold our meetings there, to mention just a few. So, be prepared for the call to contribute to the 2002 Birdathon, whether by volunteering on the committee, donating prizes, making a pledge, leading or joining a birding team.

What is Birdathon?

Birding teams of all experience levels take to the field for a competitive Bird Count. Pledges

per species or for fixed amounts are collected ahead of time. Your team may bird state-wide, locally or simply be feeder watch for up to 24 hours during Birdathon Week. Prizes are awarded for most species sighted, best bird sighting, most pledges collected, and best team name. Top prize goes to most money raised. Prize and cash donations are collected from the business and professional community. You can help by having your employer match your pledges or donate a prize. You can also help by providing contacts or soliciting donations. Field trips during March, April and May will suggest a small donation to go towards Birdathon.

When is Birdathon?

Monday April 22 - Sunday April 28, 2002, during peak migration.

Inexchange for their generous prize donations, I promised the donors a plug, so here it is. Please consider patronizing our sponsor:

Sand Rita Lodge, HC 70, Box 5444, Sahuarita, AZ 85629, 520/625-8746, lcollister@theriver.com

Beatty's Dead & Breakfast, 2173 E. Miller Canyon Rd., Hereford, AZ 85615-9967 520/378-2728, beattybb@theriver.com

to an estimated 9,000 to 30,000 individuals, is one President Bush claims he has seen on his Texas ranch. Urban sprawl and land clearing is responsible for destruction of its limited oak-juniper scrub habitat.

wildland/urban interfaces between forests and homes. The western Congressmen supporting this boondoggle fail to comprehend the importance of fire in renewing forest ecosystems. They should be focusing on protecting homes and property at the forest/home edge, rather than the enrichment of logging companies deep in the forest.



Henslow's Sparrow. The lack of periodic fires in the forested Eastern U.S. today, and the replacement of pasturelands with second growth forests that are not allowed to burn, has brought this sparrow down to and estimated 30,000 individuals. Photo by Jim Burns



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PARALLES WITH THE PAST

By Ann McDermott

Half a millennium ago, on the property of Portmore Castle in Ireland, a great oak one stood. It inspired the music I am listening to today on Loreena McKennitt's CD entitled *The Visit*. Half a millennium ago, the hardwood forest of Ireland were being clear-cut for England's shipbuilding industry. England was building an empire and her Navy was the force that made that happen. The piece called "Bonnie Portmore: is traditional in music and lyrics, reworked by McKennitt for a new time. A timeless issue for a new time; may breaking hearts of old instruct us now.

Bonny Portmore

O Bonny Portmore I am sorry to see

Such of woeful destruction of your ornament tree

For it stood on you shore for many's the long day

Till the long boats from Antrim came to float it away

O Bonny Portmore you shine where you stand

And the more I think on you the more I think long

If I had you now as I had one before

All the lords in Old England would not purchase Portmore

All the birds in the forest they bitterly weep

Saying "where will we shelter or where will we sleep?"

Fore the oak and the ash they are all cutten down

And the walls of Bonny Portmore ale all down to the ground

O Bonny Portmore you shine where you stand

And the more I think on you the more I think long

If I had you now as I had one before

village consisting of 120 to 150 rooms. Named for Silver Creek, water source for the village and a steep hike away, it is easy to see that the location was chosen not for the convenience of those who had to carry pottery ollas back and forth to bring water to the community, but for the view. From the settlement, the canyon cut by the Agua Fria River can be seen wandering to the south. Fires set by people living in that direction would be easily seen and the inhabitants of Pueblo La Plata, probably Hohokam, would know of the impending arrival of traders, enemies or messengers. The Bradshaw Mountains and the deep canyon cut by Silver Creek are to the north. The vistas east and west extend for mile.

A massive stonewalled, two-storied building, Pueblo La Plata would have been an imposing sight rising out of the mesa's semi-desert grassland. It is probably the first major habitation a traveler would have found after having climbed the rim, but all along the rim of the mesa there are signs of terracing for agricultural fields and possible fortifications. It appears that the approximately 3,000 people lived in scattered villages on Perry Mesa between AD 1200 and 1450. But they were hardly isolated. The broken pottery around Pueblo La Plata consists of styles created locally, but also some from Anasazi origin, a people to the north, and from the Verde River Valley peoples as well.

Pueblo La Plata is the most accessible of the archeological sites in the monument and the one that will be developed somewhat for the public. Just now, 4-wheel drive vehicles are recommended to reach it, as the road is unpaved and very rough in some spots, impassible during a rain. Cathy Pedrick, acting manager of the monument for the Bureau of Land Management, and archeologist by training, said that she hoped the rain would hold off until we made it back to I-17. It did. It did. But she also hoped the development of better roads through the region came slowly, if at all, for Pueblo La Plata, the most

KENN KAUFMAN CAPTIVATES CONSIDERABLE CROWD

By Laurie Nessel

Ken Kaufman, noted author and celebrated birding authority, spoke on the Secret Lives of birds and Birders at the Maricopa Audubon meeting on October 2nd. In his subtly humorous way he entertained and educated a full house at the Phoenix Zoo Auditorium. Kenn set the tone of his presentation by having the lights dimmed and quickly launching into a selection of beautiful bird slides, identifying some of the species, but deliberately leaving us to speculate on the identity of others. He spoke generally about house birds search for food, how they sleep, how they view their environment, as well as how they court, nest and migrate. Most of his knowledge, he claimed, was gleaned from

alter egos, illustrated with clever and humorous photos of Kenn himself in various costumes.

Ken gave a tribute to Roger Tory Peterson, who mentored Kenn from the time he was a teenager. Ken said that Roger always strove to reach the latent birder, the youth, and the general public. Although he was quite capable of catering to the advanced birder, he chose not to do so. Kenn has decided to carry on this Roger Tory Peterson tradition. Kenn returned the honorarium we offer our out of town speakers in tribute to the years Maricopa Audubon has been a leader of conservation in the Southwest. Thank you Kenn for a wonderful and inspiring program.

PARALLELS WITH THE PAST (continued from page 5)

Cathy Pedrick said their most successfully prosecuted case had been reported to gangers by Yavapai college kids visiting the site. They has a cell phone with them. Some Yavapai trace their roots to Perry Mesa communities. The kids had been there to perform a ceremony honoring their ancestors and saw the pot hunters at work.

Melinda said the majority of their job is collecting garbage. Some people actually dump household trash off the highway, then head on down the road. She estimated that garbage collection takes up 90% of her time.

Besides prehistoric archeological sites, Agua Fria National Monument also protects early 19th Century, Anglo-American remnants of Basque sheep camps, historic mines an military camps. The canyons cutting deep into the mesa house divers plant and animal species, riparian oases in the midst of semi-arid grasslands. Species of animals such as the lowland leopard frog, the Mexican garter snake, the common black hawk and desert tortoise that have found their

and speckled dace thrive in the Agua Fria River and its tributaries. We have "ornamental trees" and so much more at stake here. Will we learn to love it in time to save it? Or will we sing ballads of morning its loss?

Agua Fria National Monument is within Congressman Bob Stump's district. Thus far, he has supported it. Cathy Pedrick said that while other newly established national monuments in and near Arizona are becoming beleaguered by lawsuits which seek to reduce their size or do away with them altogether, Agua Fria is thus far not threatened. Some of the other new national monuments: Grand Canyon-Parashant, Ironwood Forest, Sonoran Desert and Vermilion Cliffs are not so blessed. She urged us and all citizens of Arizona to contact Senator McCain and the State Director of the BLM to plead that they protect these national monuments and support them against the lawsuits that threaten their existence.

The human population of Arizona is exploding. Urban sprawl is spreading through hill and dale. Cities have to grow

All the lords in Old England would not purchase Portmore

Driving from Phoenix on I-17, I climbed through the canyons around New River. Signs along the road told of new housing developments planned and in progress. Rock Springs and Black Canyon City exits led to communities which are expanding with new homes almost daily. Finally I reached "the Rim" and topped Perry Mesa. Just before Badger Springs exit, a sign advertised Agua Fria National Monument, recently created by William J. Clinton, when President of the United States of America. The monument can be reached from both Badger Springs exit and Bloody Basin exit. I took Bloody Basin, as I'd been instructed.

I visited Pueblo La Plata a blustery April day, whose frosty exhalations pushed leaden clouds across the horizon to bear down on our small group as we waited for the park ranger to appear and guide us to the archeological site we were there to see. Rain was the promise as hats were blown away and dust danced in the unpaved parking lot.

Pueblo La Plata is one of the largest of the more than 450 prehistoric archaeological sites protected within Agua Fria National Monument. Between AD 1200 and 1450 it was a

accessible site, is heavily damaged by pot collectors. It is also the best studied site and has been mapped so that any new damage can be readily spotted. None of the other sites have been thoroughly studied or mapped. The pot collectors digging in them must be most intrepid and know where to go. Some of them are and do.

Most of our journey was by road, but we hiked the last third of a mile from the Visitor Register. Rains of winter and early spring brought forth gourd vines in the site's rock mounds. Birds twittered in low shrubs, hiding from the wild wind. Yucca dotted the tobosa grass covered plain, in which filaree, blue dick, daisies, primrose, juniper, Christmas cactus, prickly pear and Indian Paintbrush waved bright with spring colors. We did not see the mammals that populate the area, though Cathy said several small herds of antelope call it home and are known to browse near Pueblo La Plata.

Park Ranger Melinda Mahoney, whose pick-up truck led our string of vehicles out to the ancient village, told of the difficulties of policing the area, watching for those who enter the park to loot the archeological sites.

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grasp on survival threatened in other, more developed parts of Arizona, are safe here. Prong-horn, mule deer, white-tail deer, elk, black bear, javelina, mountain lions, small mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish and Neotropical migratory birds also dwell here. Four species of native fish including longfin dace, Gila mountain sucker, Gila chub

somewhere. But they ought not to grow everywhere. We have some tough choices to make as a people about just what we value. And make no mistake. Lives are at stake.

Will we learn to love it in time: Or will we sell our Portmore and later sing ballads mourning its loss?





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Cooper's Hawk (Juvenile) photographed by Jim Burns at Mesquite Wash 10/01 with Canon EOS A2 body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens, and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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WHERE & WHEN - SEPTEMBER THROUGH NOVEMBER 2001

By Mike Baker/Walter Thurber

Car Pooling:

Maricopa Audubon Strongly encourages carpooling on filed trips. Please make every effort to organize your own carpool; consolidate vehicles at meeting places; and/or contact leaders for car pooling assistance. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers 5 to 10 cents per mile.

Legend:

Limit: Maximum number of participants per filed trip. Please call early to make your reservations.

Difficulty Levels 1 through 5: 1 equals very low level of exertion, short wading distance, considerable birding from vehicle and possible multiple birding stops. 5 equals very high level of difficulty with respect to exertion. Longer hiking distances are expected with possible steep trails.

Reminders:

- Wear neutral colored clothing and sturdy walking shoes.
- bring sunscreen, sunglasses, head protection and water
- Avoid wearing bright colors
- bring your binoculars
- don't forget to have FUN!!

Saturday and Sunday, November 10 - 11

Rocky Point Mexico Field Trip- Bob will take us to encounter overwintering North American shorebirds and waterfowl, and Sea of Cortez breeding species including two boobies. Possible shorebirds, waterfowl and gulls include Oystercatcher, Surfbird, Wandering Tattler, scoters, loons, Yellow-footed and Thayers gull. Lower Sonoran desert specialty birds include Large-billed Sparrow and LeConte's Thrasher. Drivers should purchase Mexican Insurance prior to entering Mexico. Limit 20. Difficulty 1. \$25.00 contribution to Maricopa Audubon

Tuesday, November 27

Gilbert Library Ponds -- Join Cindy and visit the Gilbert Library ponds and wildlife area. The ponds and associated marsh vegetation attracts a variety of migrating waterfowl, wintering raptor and passerine species. Bring a lunch, water and spotting scope if available. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 1. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Cindy West
480-830-5332
cwestbirdr@juno.com

Saturday, December 8

Estrella Mountain Regional Park- Bob will lead us around the 30 square mile Estrella County park to observe an assortment of Sonoran desert and riparian birds. In addition, many examples of indigenous flora and fauna will be shown. We will meet at 7:30, at the navy area parking lot, at the east end of the picnic loop. There is a \$3.00 park entrance fee. Bring a lunch, water and spotting scope if available. Morning only. No limit. Difficulty 2.

Leader: Bob Gaulden
623-932-3811
estrellamountainpark@mail.maricopa.gov

Wednesday, January 23

Thrasher Palaver -- Jim will lead us around Arlington/Buck-eye/Palo Verde in search of our 5 thrasher species that frequent this area. Plan on an early start as these birds are active and sing at dawn. Other birds species expected include wintering hawks and sparrows. Bring a lunch, water and spotting scope if available. Limit: 10. Difficulty: 2. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Field Trips

(continued from page 7)

By Mike Baker/Walter Thurber

Saturday, February 15-16.

Bill Williams National Wildlife Refuge - Mike will take us to many unique birding areas around the Bill Williams delta in this wildlife reserve. A diverse array of lower Sonoran-Mojave desert, riparian and marsh plant communities provides excellent habitat for many raptor, waterfowl, shorebird, marsh and overwintering passerine bird species. Bring sturdy walking shoes, water, a lunch and spotting scope if available. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 3. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Mike Totcky
520-505-7801
mtotcky@uneedspeed.net

Saturday, March 2

Lost Dutchman State Park - Join Laurie and visit this beautiful park located at the base of the Sperrington Mountains near Apache Junction. The spring flowers, bird feeders and bird baths here are an attractant that few birds can ignore. Birds expected in the area include resident Canyon Towhee, Costa's Hummingbird, Phainopepla, migrating warblers and vireos. There is a park entry fee. Bring a lunch, water and sturdy walking shoes. Limit: 25. Difficulty: 2. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Laurie Nessel
480-968-5614
laurinessel@hotmail.com

Saturday, March 16

Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge, Brown Canyon - Birds along this sycamore and live oak mountain canyon, with a 47-foot natural bridge hidden in the upper

Saturday, April 6

Dudleyville, Lower San Pedro River Area - This a very diverse area with upper Sonoran desert and riparian plant communities and agriculture area. Many of Arizona's special raptor species nest in the Dudleyville area which include Gray, Common Black-, Zone-tailed Hawks and Mississippi Kite. Passerine species abound in the riparian gallery forests. Bring a lunch, water and sturdy walking shoes. Limit: 25. Difficulty: 2. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Josh Burns
602-468-3002
josh_a_burns@yahoo.com

Sunday, April 21

Patagonia Area - This trip begins at the Patagonia- Sonoita Creek Preserve, a nationally known birding hotspot owned and managed by the Nature Conservancy. Gray Hawk, Thick-billed Kingbird, Northern Beardless Tyrannulet, and Green Kingfisher will be some bird species sought. Other areas visited include the Patton's hummingbird feeders, Kino Springs and time permit- ting, the Nogales sewage ponds. Bring a lunch, water and sturdy walking shoes. Limit: 20. Difficulty: 2. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Richard Kaiser
602-276-3312

Wednesday, May 01

Agua Fria National Monument - Here is a great opportunity to become familiar with one of Arizona's newest national monuments. Agua Fria covers over 110 square miles between Black Canyon City and Cordes Junction. The rugged area of

Society is suggested. Contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Bob Witzeman
602-840-0052
No e-mails please.

Leader: Jim Burns
480-946-2502
jpbaztec@aol.com

Saturday, February 2
Lower Salt River- We will make various stops along a ten mile stretch of the Salt River between Granite Reef Dam and Saguaro Lake. This section of the river lies within the Tonto National Forest north of Mesa. The flowing river and its adjacent mesquite bosques make this an excellent area for waterbirds, raptors and possible early migrants. There is a lake entry fee. Bring water, lunch and a scope if available. Limit 20. Difficulty. Contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Charles Saffell
480-668-9393
mws2@qwest.net

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canyon includes Montezuma quail, Strickland's woodpecker, or painted red-start. A refuge naturalist will cover birding, plant identification, and natural history of some of the canyon's wild residents. One of Arizona's special places, Brown Canyon is opened by "guided tour only." There is a fee of \$5 per person. Bring walking shoes, a lunch and plenty of water. Limit: 20. Difficulty: 3. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Bonnie Swarbrick
520-823-4251 x 108
bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov

grassland, riparian and upper Sonoran desert contains more than 450 prehistoric sites and wide array of sensitive wildlife species. Some expected bird species are Zone-tailed Hawk, Vermillion Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo and Blue Grosbeak. Bring a lunch, water and sturdy walking shoes. Please contact leader for information and reservations.

Leader: Dwayne Fink
480-967-9202
edna.fink@asu.edu



Are you dying to lead a trip and it is not on the list? Please contact any Board Member with your information.





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Photo Quiz Answers

By Jim Burns

Birders generally understand that bird taxonomy (the grouping into orders, families, and genera) is based on structural similarities, but there is little in the layman's literature about the fascinating subject of the taxonomic order itself and how it was derived. Birds in the front of your field guide are more "primitive" than those in the back, passerines in general more structurally evolved than waterbirds, warblers, more "like us"; if you will, than shorebirds.

Our current quiz again features a family of birds in the from of your books, a family barely out of the primordial soup. Though some are long distance migrants, these birds are weak fliers with no tails to speak of. Their feet and legs, so close to the rear of the body as to make travel on land almost impossible, can be extended backward in flight to help with steering. But, as you can see in the first photo, those feet are lobed making this family, like the loons before them, wonderfully evolved for their water world, and any human with a fear of the water may find the live of a grebe harder to fathom than that of an albatross or buteo.

A) Good Photo, Easy Bird

Except for its remarkable bill, this grebe in black and white and shades of gray looks very similar to our second quiz bird in the January/February issue. But the bill length here is indicative of overall size and the diver supporting this veritable spear is from the genus *Aechmophorus* which translates from Greed as "spear-bearer." The two large grebes of this genus are nearly twice the length and three times the weight of the Horned Grebe of our previous quiz and are further distinguished from their smaller family relatives in the *Podiceps* genus by proportionately longer, thinner necks.

In the field, of course, the real question lies in separating our large grebes, Western and Clark's, from one another. Bill color and facial pattern provide the answer. Although bill color is much the more reliable of these a non-breeding bird bobbing around in the distance, here in black and white it is of no help. However, in a close view such as this we can readily see dark facial feathering

separate species in the mid '80s/ A careful discussion of the field marks seen in our second photo will illuminate why that split is still debated and disputed by some avian researchers.

Older field guides treat the *Aechmophorus* grebes as color phases of the same species, Western the dark phase, Clark's the light. Newer books, after the split, show us the eyes of breeding adults, Western encompassed by dark, Clark's by white. The most recent guides such as Sibley and the third edition National Geo also show us winter adults...with a caveat. In winter Westerns, the dark facial feathering fades somewhat like that in our first photo. In winter Clark's, the white facial feathering smudges and darkens... beginning to resemble that in our first photo. If this were not enough to give us pause, not that our second bird is obviously much darker overall than our first bird.

We don't yet have a date for the second photo. Could this second bird be another winter Western of even be the same bird? Since we cannot discern bill color, the short answer is "yes, it could be." Several times in this quiz we have spoken of sight angles and the play of light and shadow changing perceptions. Sibley gives us a better reason—"Intermediate birds, seen regularly, especially during winter, are unidentifiable. Some may be hybrids." So, if you see a large grebe reasonable close during breeding season you should be able to identify it by facial pattern, but remember that identification of large grebes out of breeding season should be based on bill color. Facial patterns can be very similar at this time of year.

Our second photo bird is, indeed, a Clark's Grebe photographed in November 1995 along the lower Colorado river. In the color slide this grebe's bill is the deep, bright orange-with-tones of red indicative of Clark's. The bird's back appears uniformly black because it is perfectly shadowed from the bright sunlight by the head and neck. This photo seems identifiable as a Clark's because there appears no hint of dark feathering below the eye or above the lores, but the point of this exercise has

RUFOUS-BACKED ROBIN

By Jim Burns

Not the least of the elements which have made our state the most coveted birding destination in the country is the fact that there really is no off season for Arizona's special species--species found only here or more easily here than in any other state. Winter is no exception. Although most of our snowbirds come from the north, one species which has certainly become a wintertime specialty over the past three decades is Rufous-backed Robin, an endemic breeder in western Mexico from southern Sonora to Oaxaca.

*Turdus rufopalliatu*s is now an almost annual winter visitor to Arizona since it was first recorded in 1960, often found in more than one location simultaneously. On its breeding grounds, Rufous-backed Robin favors deciduous forest edges, suburban gardens, and plantations, and in winter can be found in flocks much like our American Robin, utilizing fruiting trees and berry bushes, moving on when this food source has been depleted.

The reasons for the occasional northward movement of individual Rufous-backed Robins in winter are poorly understood. Drought and poor berry crops south of the border are primary suspects. There are scattered records from the lower Rio Grande Valley, southwest Texas, New Mexico, and California, but here in Arizona a winter without a Rufous-back has become the exception rather than the rule and the species is no longer included on the Arizona Bird Committee's review list.

Sometimes but not always seen in loose association with American Robins, the winter vagrant Rufous-backed Robins in our state are usually discovered coming to *Pyracantha* and Hackberry. Despite the fact that this strikingly marked thrush will linger in one area for several days or several months as long as the berry supply persists, in Arizona it is a secretive and elusive species which can require several trips and much patience on the part of the birder. Stories abound of groups of birders deployed around a small hackberry grove or even a single tree, one or two lucky souls rewarded with drop dead close-ups while those on the other side never even glimpse the bird.

Logically because of its abundance of fruiting trees, Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park just west of Superior was the hot spot for Rufous-backed Robin in Arizona during the 90's. At least one Rufous-back and sometimes two were seen there for four consecutive winters, primarily in the vicinity of the herb garden. In 1990 an obliging Rufous-back spent the entire winter in an Ahwatukee backyard, and in 2001 another spent the entire winter in a very public area of downtown Phoenix. In the suburban part of the state there are multiple records from Patagonia Lake State Park, River Road north of Nogales, and the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum in Tucson.

There are two good ways to find an overwintering Rufous-back: go to an area with multiple past records and spend the day looking for something else; go to an area

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Photo Quiz Answers

(continued from page 9)

is too long and too thick for a Horned, and there is that well defined line running

Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers Photo Quiz Answers

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completely encompassing the eye. This is diagnostic of Western Grebe. In the color slide this grebe's bill is the dull yellow-with-olive tones also indicative of Western. Other useful, corroborative, but not clinching differences between the two *Aechmophorus* species are dorsal color and voice. Westerns are typically more uniformly dark. Which makes them appear darker overall, and they have a two syllable call, the second syllable higher or accented. Clark's call is an ascending single syllable.

been twofold- don't assume every large grebe you see in Maricopa County in winter is a Western, and don't assume every large grebe you see in Maricopa County in winter can be positively identified.

C) Bad Photo, Easy Bird

One of the many anomalies in bird photography is that a great slide does not always translate into a good print and, conversely, a crummy slide can sometimes be manipulated into something pleasing on paper. Birders and photographers mumble the same foul letter words when a great bird appears backlit. Our third grebe was photographed with the sun behind it, the bird's nice color and sharp markings muddy and obscured against the bright water background. Overexposure in Adobe Photoshop created this rather stunning black and white, but the color bring left much to be desired.

This Western Grebe was photographed on McKellips Lake along the Scottsdale Greenbelt in November 2000. In breeding plumage, roughly March through September, the dark feathering around this bird's eye would be even darker, nearly matching the black of its crown, as would the lighter loreal spot discernible in this photo.

B) Good Photo, Difficult Bird

At first glance our second grebe shows the same long, thin neck and the same long, thin spear as our Western, but it has a decidedly different facial pattern, so it must be a Clark's? Perhaps, but we need to slow down a bit. Ornithologists split Western and Clark's grebes into

This grebe's dark over light head pattern is similar to the *Aechmophorus* grebes, but both its bill and neck are shorter and thicker, lending a chunkier, less elegant jizz reminiscent of the *Podeiceps* genus of medium sized grebes. Although the head pattern does closely resemble our Horned Grebe in last winter's quiz, note that this bill

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under the cheek and up the side of the neck. Any confusion at this point probably again arises from no knowing the date of the photograph and assuming this is yet another winter grebe.

This is a breeding plumaged Red-necked Grebe, the largest of our three *Podeiceps* grebes, photographed in Alaska, July 1994. This bird was presented in breeding plumage to illustrate again the intriguing seasonal reversals of the light and dark head patterns which this genus undergoes. As much as this summer Red-necked seems to mimic a winter Horned, winter Red-neckeds are identified by dark cheeks delineated by a light stirrup running from below the base of the bill up to the

back of the crown, a pattern not unlike that of winter Eared.

Red-necked Grebes, rare in Arizona in winter, could easily be overlooked or mistaken for larger or smaller relatives by birders unaccustomed to seeing them in the desert. There were confirmed sightings in the '90s from Lake Powell and Lake Pleasant and several rumors from the lower Colorado, but Red-necked Grebe is by no means an annual occurrence in our state.

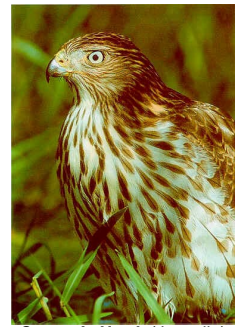
If, like most birders, you word associate "bird" with the medium of air and the marvel of flight, keep a closer watch for some of our "lower" species. For those of us uncomfortable around water, grebe in the next life could be a wonderfully satisfying experience.

10



The Cactus Wren-Dition

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Cooper's Hawk (Juvenile) photographed by Jim Burns at Mesquite Wash 10/01 with Canon EOS A2 body, Canon 400mm f/2.8 lens, and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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AUGUST TO LATE SEPTEMBER 2001

By Janet Witzeman

Two more Glossy Ibis (an adult and a first year bird) were discovered at the high dike pond e. of El Mirage Pond Aug. 11 (TC).

Two Least Bitterns were reported at the cobble ponds at Tres Rios Aug 4 (PM), at least one was seen at the Hayfield site marsh at Tres Rios Aug. 12 (R&JWz), and at least five were reported in the marsh upstream from 115th Ave and the Gila river Aug. 19 & Sept. 3 (SG, TC). A Great Egret, present at Boyce Thompson Arboretum (hereafter BTA) from July 10 through Sept. 2 represented the first summer resident record for that area (CT). A Reddish Egret was discovered at Roosevelt Lake Sept. 5 (GR) and 8 remained at least two more days; there have been only ten previous state records. At least 100 cattle Egrets were counted at Arlington Aug. 8 (RWD, AV). A Black-Crowned Night-Heron present at BTA from July 24 through Sept. 13, provided the first summer resident record for that area (CT).

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks nested again at El Mirage Pond where six adults eleven immatures, and threes downy young were observed Aug. 4 (MB); adults with young were also observed at the high dike pond e. El Mirage during August (m.ob.).

Mississippi Kites were found far north of their usual area in s.e. Arizona one was reported in Flagstaff in June and five (two adults, two first year birds and a juvenile were discovered in Chino Valley, n. of Prescott during the summer and represented only the second breeding record for this species for Yavapai Co. (CT). A female N Harrier was observed at Riggs and Maricopa Roads on the early date of July 17 (MB). The nesting attempt of the pair of Red-shouldered Hawks at the Hassayampa River Preserve (hereafter HRP) was unsuccessful (NL). An adult male Rough-legged Hawk was reported at Bushnell Tanks on the early date of Sept. 18 (Jsa).

AM. Avocets nested at El Mirage Pond adults and young were reported there Aug 8 (MB). A Ruddy Turnstone was

At least four Lewis's Wood-peckers were observed at Oak Flat Campground Sept. 20 (CT) An Acorn Woodpecker was seen at a low elevation location at Granite Reef Picnic Area (hereafter GRPA Sept. 23 (SG).

A N. Beardless-Tyrannulet was seen again at the HRP Sept. 7 (JB), individuals were also observed at BTA Sept. 16 and in the riparian area e. of BTA Sept. 11-19 (CT). An Olive-side Flycatcher was seen upstream from 115th Ave. and the Gila River Sept. 3 (TC). Two Greater Pewees, observed on Mt. Ord Sept. 7 (SG) were somewhat later than usual. A **Tropical Kingbird**, found along the Gila River w. of 115th Ave. Sept. 3 (TC), represented the sixth county record and the first in fall. The **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher**, observed on Southern, e. of 107th Ave. since at least July 10, was still present there Sept. 13 (MB *et al.*); it may be the same one that was reported in that area from Sept. 16 to at least Oct. 12 a year ago.

A Gray Vireo was found Sept. 12 at BTA where it is considered to be a casual visitor (CT). An immature **Red-eyed Vireo** was discovered at Powers Butte Sept 23 (MO). A flock of **Pinyon Jays** were discovered below the corral at Slate Creek Divide Sept 6-7 (SH SG). Pinyon Jays have been recorded only seven previous times in Maricopa County and it has been more than ten years since they last put in an appearance.

An adult male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was discovered along Queen Creek, e. of BTA Sept. 14 (CT). Individual black-and-white Warblers were found on Mt. Ord Sept. 7 and at GRPA Sept. 14 (SG). A **Kentucky Warbler** was discovered at GRPA Sept. 15 (JoB); there have been three previous county records. A confirmation of Re-faced Warbler nesting in the county was made when an adult was observed feeding young about Slate Creek Divide June 10 (SG).

A Cassin's Sparrow was found with many Chipping, Brewers, Lark, and Vesper Sparrows at Oak Flat Campground Sept. 12 (CT). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was present in a Scottsdale yard Aug. 21-26 (JB).

THANKSGIVING BIRD COUNT

By Deva Burns

Although not as well known as Christmas Bird Counts and Breeding Bird Surveys, the Thanksgiving Counts were begun in 1966 by Dr. Ernest Edwards and the Lynchburg Bird Club in Virginia. Dr. John G. Hewston has been the Western Count Compiler since 1992. The number of counters has gone from just a couple dozen to nearly 500. There are still many areas in the West that need counters. A better distribution of counts is also needed.

Thanksgiving day is the day of the count and the counter chooses the best time of day that fits his/her schedule and the location of the count

circle. Since the count lasts only ONE HOUR and the circle is only 15 FEET in diameter, you can view it as a break in the eating of turkey and the watching of football. Individual birds are to be counted only once during the hour, even if they pay repeated visits to the count area. Flocks should be counted only once. This is one bird count that can be made in comfort--pull up your chair to a window and watch your self-designated circle.

For more information and how to report your counts, contact Dr. John G. Hewston at 707/822-5288. Dr. Hewston is a professor at Humboldt State University in Arcata, CA.

RUFIOUS-BACKED ROBIN

(Continued From Page 10)

where there has been a recent sighting and get there before the berries are gone and before anyone else arrives for the day. Be very quiet and very alert. Non-breeding Rufous-backs seem to prefer overnight roosts on or near the ground in dense tangles or blowdowns. When they come into a food tree they will often come in near or at the very top, typically with no vocalization.

Be persistent. On my first trip for this species, to Kino Springs in 1987, I saw the bottom half of the bird's underside--the white belly. Two years later, near Nogales, I saw the rufous saddle across the back and scapulars but not the bird's head. I figured two more trips would give me a composite and I could then add it

to my list. To me the most striking of this thrush's unique features, given a look at the head, is the yellow orbital ring which seems to pick up the rufous tones and give the bird a "red-eyed" look nothing at all like American Robin. This is perfectly depicted in Sibley but not even shown in the National Geo.

The bird in the accompanying photograph is the 1999 Oak Flat bird, coming to Pyracantha which it was sharing with several Hermit Thrushes and Spotted Towhees. Later the same day I saw the Casa Grande Rufous-back, fully exposed in bright sunlight--two drop dead looks after a decade of fleeting glimpses. When I returned to Oak Flat the following day the berries were gone and so was the Rufous-back, not to be seen again that winter.

Of Special Note

AZ Special Species

Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings Sightings

discovered at the high dike pond e. of El Mirage Sept. 8 (TC et al); there have been 13 previous county records. Four sanderlings were found in n.e. Arizona Sept 20-22 (CB, BJ). A semi-palmated Sandpiper was observed at Many Farms Lake Sept. 22 (CB, BJ). Two early Dunlins were seen at El Mirage Pond Aug. 21 and one was seen there Sept. 13 (MB); the species does not usually arrive until October. Individual Stilt Sandpipers were observed at El Mirage Pond Aug. 8 (MB, RWd, AV), at the Water Ranch Ponds in Gilbert Sept. 1-3 (SG), and at the high dike pond e. of El Mirage Sept. 15 (JIB) Individual Short-billed Dow-itchers were found at the Gilbert/Riggs Ponds Aug. 5 (CB, RWz) and at the Water Ranch Ponds Sept. 1-3 (SG).

Two Caspian Terns were observed at the pond s. of Ocotillo Rd. in Gilbert Sept. 2 (F). Eight Black Terns, counted at El Mirage Pond Aug. 27 (MB) was a large concentration for this uncommon migrant. The Eurasian Collared Dove was still present in Palo Verde Aug. 8 (RWd, AV). Yellow-billed Cuckoos were reported at Tres Rios in late July and August (PM, RWz) and one calling along Queen Creek in late June and late July represented only the third record for BTA (CT). Individual Calliope Hummingbirds were found in n.e. Arizona at Becker Lake Sept, 7 and at Sanders Sept. 21 (CB, BJ).

A Belted Kingfisher was observed at the Cobble Ponds at Tres Rios on the early date of Aug. 4 (PM).

Highlights from s.e. Arizona: A number of **Short-tailed Hawks** were reported from the Chiricahua and Huachuca Mountains. An adult was reported above the road to Rustler Park Aug. 5 and a juvenile was reported off and on from Aug. 25-Sept. 3 near Barfoot Lookout. A juvenile was reported in Carr Canyon August 18 and it, or another, was seen of and on from Beattys in Miller Canyon until Sept. 9. A **Plain-capped Starthroat** was found in French Joe Canyon Aug. 1 and remained at least until Sept. 2 when a second one was found there. Unprecedented numbers of male Painted Buntings were found throughout s.e. Arizona in early August. The pair of **Rufous-capped Warblers** nested successfully in French Joe Canyon; three juveniles were seen with the adult pair Sept. 8 (*vide* JH).

Abbreviations-BTA (Boyce Thompson Arboretum), GRPA (Granite Reef Picnic Area), HRP (Hassayampa River Preserve), m.ob. (many observers).

Observers: Charles Babbitt, Make Baker, Jack Bartley, Him Burns, Josh Burns, Troy Corman, Herb Fibel, Steve Ganley, Jay Hand,

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(continued from page 11)

Stuart Healy, Bud Johnson, Nancy London, Pete Moulton, John Saba, Carl Tomoff, Anita Van Auken, Russ Widner, Robert Witzeman.

Please send reports of unusual bird sightings to me by email: jwitzeman@aol.com or by phone: 602-840-6089



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Cooper's Hawk (Juvenile)
 photographed by **Jim Burns** at
 Mesquite Wash 10/01 with Canon
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Arizona Christmas Bird Counts

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE 2001-2001

By [Walter Thurber](#)

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive database that helps to monitor winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

Participants are typically assigned to teams based on their bird identification skill level and endurance. A \$5.00 participation

fee defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the count results. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one that interests you and contact the compiler for more information.

On page 13-14 is a list of the Arizona counts, with one additional count in New Mexico and four in Mexico. The letter code to the left of the count on the accompanying map: three of the Mexico counts are not shown, no symbol is listed for Phoenix and Prescott.

[\(continued on page 14\)](#)

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Map Code	Count Name	Compiler (click on name to email)	Phone
Friday, December 14			
<u>1</u>	Saint David	Rob Hunt	(520) 432-6684
<u>V</u>	Salt-Verde Rivers	Josh Burns	(602) 468-3002
Saturday, December 15			
<u>A</u>	Atascosa Highlands	Ken Kertell	(520) 327-3822
<u>B</u>	Avra Valley	Geo. Montgomery	(520) 682-8530
<u>M</u>	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Richard Robinson	(928) 783-6804
<u>N</u>	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	(928) 526-1022
<u>Q</u>	Nogales	Mike Bissontz	(520) 577-8778

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE 2001-2001

(continued from page 13)

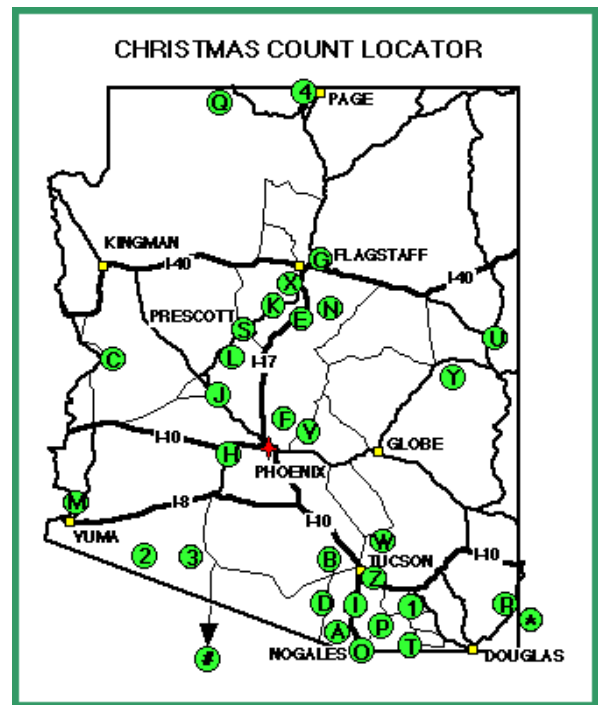
By [Walter Thurber](#)

Map Code	Count Name	Compiler (click on name to email)	Phone
Sunday, December 30			
<u>±</u>	Ejido San Pedro, Chihuahua, MX (not on map)	Cynthia Melcher	(970) 484-8373
<u>R</u>	Portal	Arnold Moorhouse	(520) 364-3178
Monday, December 31			
<u>Q</u>	Pipe Spring National Monument	Andrea Bornemeier	(928) 643-7105
<u>2</u>	Sierra Pinta, Cabeza Prieta NWR	David Griffin	(619) 445-9302
Tuesday, January 1			
<u>#</u>	Baviacora, Sonora, MX	Arnold Moorhouse	(520) 364-3178
<u>S</u>	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	(928) 636-6944
Thursday, January 3			
<u>4</u>	Glen Canyon	John Spence	(928) 608-6267
Friday, January 4			
<u>D</u>	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	(520) 823-4251
Saturday, January 5			
	Dudleyville	Tracy McCarthy	(602) 973-0881

Arizona Christmas Bird Counts

W	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	(520) 296-5629
Y	Timber Mesa	Jimmy Videle	(928) 537-5144
Sunday, December 16			
K	Jerome	Gary Romig	(928) 639-1516
#	Puerto Penasco, Sonora, MX	Steve Ganley	(480) 830-5538
Z	Tucson Valley	Lisa Schibley	(520) 529-7091
Wednesday, December 19			
	Phoenix-Tres Rio	Daniela Yellan	(602) 942-7791
Friday, December 21			
§	Alamos, Sonora, MX (not on map)	David MacKay	011 52 642 80466
Saturday, December 22			
J	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	(623) 465-0012
Sunday, December 23			
X	Sedona	Dottie Hook	(928) 204-1894
§	Yécora, Sonora, MX (not on map)	Jack Whetstone	
Wednesday, December 26			
H	Gila River	Troy Corman	(602) 482-6187
Thursday, December 27			
E	Camp Verde	Phyllis Smeeth	(928) 284-984
Friday, December 28			
E	Carefree	Walter Thurber	(480) 483-6450
Saturday, December 29			
3	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	David Griffin	(619) 445-9302
G	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Russell Balda	(928) 526-2865
I	Green Valley-Madera Cyn	Matt Gable	(520) 578-2139
*	Peloncillo Mts, NM	Alan Craig	(520) 558-2220

	Elfrida	Rob Hunt	(520) 432-6684
Unknown			
C	Bill Williams Delta	Michael Totcky	(877) 837-8274
P	Patagonia	Matt Brown	(520) 394-2400
S	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	(928) 778-2626



click on map to take you back to beginning of Christmas Count

I	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	(520) 803-0221
U	Saint Johns	Brian Heap	(928) 337-4865
	Havasu NWR – Topock, AZ – Needles, AZ (1 st Annual)	Norma Miller	(520) 578-1399

