

February 4: Mike Rupp "Birds of the Salt River – Gillespie Dam to Coon Bluff". The owner of Rupp Aerial Photography, Inc., Mike Rupp successfully combines vocational and life interests. His documentary-style video presentation contains superb footage of birds and assorted creatures along this stretch of the Salt River. Having flown and birded around the Phoenix area for twenty years, Mike has just published "The Birdseye Guide to 101 Birding Sites, Phoenix". This book is currently available directly through Rupp Aerial (602-277-0439), at the Wild Bird Center in north Scottsdale, and at the Phoenix and Mesa locations of Wide World of Maps. Additional outlets will be available in the future. Mike has graciously agreed to have copies of this book for sale and will do a book signing for those interested. (www.ruppaerialphoto.com, select Birding Guide on the home page.)

March 4: Jim Burns "El Canelo Ranch, Texas. Jim Burns, MAS writer/photographer, highlights

or as cool as you would think it should be! He will be talking about his recent book, which reveals the regions' avian diversity as he traces 100 ornithologists from 1528 to 1900. As Col. Thomas Henry wrote in 1853, there "are to be found many curious birds, peculiar to the country." Copies of the book will be available for sale and Dan has graciously agreed to do a book signing for those who are interested. Please plan to attend our last event until next fall. (for more information on the book, visit www.uapress.arizona.edu and type Dan Fischer in the search bar.)

Speakers wanted: If you have ideas for speakers, or if you would like to make a presentation yourself, please contact Cynthia Donald, Program Chair, at (602) 791-5157 or planres@earthlink.net

temperatures are what caused the largest forest fire in Arizona's history. Gauged by the fire perimeter, 468,000 acres burned. The mosaic pattern of the fire path, however, left untouched acreage that provides habitat for wildlife and a baseline for recovery. Arizona Game and Fish reports that wildlife fared relatively well in Rodeo/Chediski. It is development in the forests and poor management that turned a natural, healthy event into a crisis. Building in the forest is a risky venture just as building in a flood plain or entering the

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Now more than ever we need your contributions to maintain the programs that make the Maricopa Audubon the unique organization that appeals to you.

Committees/ Support

.....

Activist Alert:

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Arizona Audubon Council Rep:

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Maricopa Audubon Web Site
www.maricopaadubon.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

From The Editor

By Deva Burns

The overall tone of this newsletter is one of need. A need for members that will get involved in writing letters, a need for members that will make donations to help the chapter survive, and a need for members that will actively participate in projects such as the Christmas Bird Count. The Wren-dition has always tried to provide you, the members, with information. In this issue Laurie has provided contact information about Hassayampa, the Environmental Fund has provided information on how to get employers donations to help Maricopa Audubon Society, and Walter Thurber has put together this year's CBC information. Now you, the members, need to help Maricopa Audubon Society--get involved!

This final issue of the year is the time to say thank you. Thanks to all of you who have sent in articles. Whether once or many times, your contributions are greatly appreciated. I will not take up ink and paper to list everyone, but from the bottom of my heart--THANKS!

By the way--if you are not able to attend the National meeting in December, fill out the proxy that is included in this issue and send it to Herb. (If you don't like to tear up your Wren-dition, make a copy and send it!).

Another pressing issue is the state of our local chapter. With dues share from National Audubon being incrementally phased out, it is more critical than ever that we continue to lend our support both financially and by volunteering. We have a small but dedicated group of volunteers working on securing prizes to entice all you Birdathon '03 participants. More help is always welcome. We need people to obtain prizes and donations. Or you can join or lead a birdathon team and solicit monetary pledges. Contact me about this. But I hope that the lure of prizes is not the only reason you participate. Now more than ever we need your contributions to maintain the programs that make Maricopa Audubon the unique organization that appeals to you. Your donations support out-of-town program speakers, monthly meetings, free field trips, bookstore capital, subsidized banquets, Audubon Adventures for our school children, conservation efforts and this newsletter that informs you of our many field trips, bird sightings and conservation. Last year's birdathon raised \$1,200, with \$1,000 coming from an anonymous donor. Aside from this anonymous donation, **Sharon Arnold** and **Alison Grinder** were the top contributors, raising a total of \$200.00, but fell short of the \$300.00 required to win the stained glass hummingbird. Sharon and Alison received custom bead necklaces for their efforts. The stained glass prize will be rolled over to Birdathon '03, to the individual or team that raises the most money over \$300.00. Check out our website, www.maricopaadubon.org, to see a picture of it.

In other news, The Nature Conservancy's intent to sell 35 of its 333 acre Hassayampa Preserve to the Desert Caballeros Western Museum of Wickenburg was uncovered by preserve volunteers. It was TNC's desire to keep the

story under wraps. It is part of an organization wide effort to offset management expenses and concentrate on watershed protection by partnering with entities that agree to conservation easements. Whether relegating the gateway to a living history museum is compatible with TNC's mission, to preserve natural communities that represent the diversity of life on earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive, remains to be seen. The endangered Southwest Willow Flycatcher nests on the land in question, as have Red-shouldered Hawks, only the second confirmed breeding record in the state. The Nature Conservancy has extended a comment period beyond the original Oct. 4th deadline after hearing vociferous protests from birders and preserve advocates during a meeting with preserve director, Mike Rigney (mrigney@tnc.org, The Hassayampa Preserve, 49614 Hwy. 60, Wickenburg 85390, 928-684-2772, fax 2773), TNC's State Director, Pat Graham, (pgraham@TNC.org, 333 E. Virginia Ave. Suite 216, Phoenix, AZ 85004, 602-712-0048 x 18) and

your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society . Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.

1

Desert Caballeros
Western Museum
Executive Director
Michael Ettema, on
Saturday, Sept.28th.
An open house is
planned at the
preserve for mid- to
late November to
address our concerns
and provide a status
report on the
negotiations. Before
then, I urge you to
contact Messrs.
Rigney, Graham as
well as TNC's
headquarters (The
Nature Conservancy,
4245 North Fairfax
Drive, Suite 100,
Arlington, VA 22203-
1606,
comment@tnc.org,
(800) 628-6860),
especially if you are a
TNC member.

2



The Cactus Wren-Dition

Winter 2002/2003 • Volume L, No. 4



Short-tailed Hawk
photographed by **Jim Burns** in the Chiricahua Mountains, AZ, August, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400 mm f/2.3 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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Notes & Announcements

NOTES & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Basha's donates to Help

Preserve Arizona: Give the cashier the charity code #29039 between 9/1 and 1/31 each year and Basha's will donate 1% of your total to 18 conservation & environmental groups including: az wildlife federation, audubon arizona, tucson audubon, native seeds/SEARCH, grand canyon trust, gray hawk nature center, oracle land trust, trout unlimited, wild at heart, az recycling coalition, southwest wildlife rehabilitation & education foundation, az association for environmental education, mcdowell sonoran land trust, willow bend environmental education center, four corners school of outdoor education, grand canyon wildlands council, maricopa audubon society, and land & water fund of the rockies. For more information go to www.efaz.org or call 480-969-3682.

Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch suffered much damage in the April fire that swept through the ranch. There is both an immediate and a long-term need for volunteers to assist with a wide-range of tasks as the Research Ranch implements a recovery and restoration plan. If you are interested in helping please call Sam Campana at 602 468 6470 for information. Please do not just show up without calling.

Sandhill Crane Festival: Lodi, CA, November 8-11. For information contact the festival at 916-683-1700 or www.lodichamber.com/cranefestival.html

Festival of Cranes: Socorro, NM, November 19-24. Contact information is 505-835-0424 or www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane.

The Birdseye Guide to 101 Birding Sites, Phoenix: A new guide published by Rupp Aerial Photography. The maps are excellent, it is all in color and is \$23.95. For more information check www.ruppaerialphoto.com. Also catch the author, Mike Rupp, at February's meeting.

ABA Regional Conference: January 12-16, 2003 at the Salton Sea, California. For more information call the ABA at 800-850-2473 or check their website-- www.americanbirding.org

begin at 8:30 a.m. and last all day with instruction indoor s and in the field. Call Mark Sklarny to register or with questions (480) 317-1395.

Birding in Cuba: February 15-24, 2003. Under a license from the U.S. Treasury Department, Grand Canyon University is offering an adult education class on the birds of Cuba that includes a 10 day trip to the major birding areas of Cuba. The focus of the trip will be to locate and study the 21 endemic birds of Cuba, as well as birds rarely found elsewhere in North America (Ivory-billed woodpecker!?) The cost is between \$2,500 and \$3,000. Linda and Tom Rawles will be leading the trip. For more information contact Linda at lrawles@grand-canyon.edu or at (602) 279-5900.

For a detailed itinerary email the editor and it can be sent via email. In *Winging It*, ABA's newsletter, is information for 2 more approved study trips to Cuba. These trips are sponsored by Manchester Community College. For information contact Gary Markowski at 860-354-5590 or cubbirds@aol.com. The dates are February 13-22 and February 27- March 8.

ABA Annual Convention: June 2-8, 2003 in Eugene, Oregon. Call the ABA or check their website for more information.

More birding and nature festivals.

www.americanbirding.org and www.birdinghotspot.com

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—For information, 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—

NATIONAL AUDUBON BOARD MEETING

By Herb Fibel

The National Audubon Society Board of Directors is holding its December 2002 meeting at the Arizona Biltmore on December 7th and 8th. I would encourage each of you to attend. This is the meeting where the annual board elections are held. There are 36 NAS board members. Nine of the 36 NAS board members are nominated as regional board members by the chapters in the various regions, while the remaining 27 directors are considered at-large directors. Regardless of whether the person is nominated by the regional chapters or whether he or she is nominated by the nominating committee, they all stand for election at the annual December meeting. Each year one-third (12) of the 36 directors are elected at the December board meeting to a three-year term.

Historically the nominating committee lists only twelve candidates for the twelve board openings. As required by law NAS mails out to all members a

proxy form either in the Audubon magazine or separately, authorizing one of the NAS bigwigs to cast the vote of the proxy sender for each of the twelve nominated candidates. Last year the NAS people claimed that they had some 40,000 proxies in hand at the December meeting.

A group of chapter leaders from around the U.S. is trying to make this process more democratic, and is hoping to get more chapter oriented people elected to the NAS board. You can help by attending the meeting or by sending me the proxy below, thus allowing me to vote in your stead.

You must be a member in good standing of National Audubon on October 4, 2002. If you would like to help, please complete the proxy and mail it to me, Herb Fibel, 1128 E. Geneva Drive, Tempe, Arizona, 85282-3940. Do not send in the proxy you receive from National Audubon.

PROXY

Instructions:

You must be a member of National Audubon Society in good standing to assign your voting right under this proxy.

Members, please place a check next to each voting instruction you wish to authorize.

When voting for Board member candidates, you may only vote for a maximum of 12 people, because there are only 12 vacant positions.

To whom it may concern:

Know all persons by these presents, that I, the undersigned, a member of the National Audubon Society, Inc., do hereby constitute and appoint: **Herbert Fibel** with full power of substitution, my attorney and agent for me, in my name, place and stead, to vote my proxy the number votes I should be entitled to cast, if personally present at the annual meeting of members of the National Audubon Society to be held in Phoenix, Arizona, on either Saturday, December 7, 2002 or Sunday, December 8, 2002, and at any adjourned meeting thereof as authorized below:

_____ to vote for the election of any, but not more than 12, directors to terms expiring in 2005 or until their successors are elected, as he chooses.

Nature and Bird Photography

Workshop--January 17, 2003 at the Hassayampa Preserve in Wickenburg. Open to all skill levels. Bring lunch and camera equipment. The price is \$45 which is a savings of \$75 over the regular cost. The workshop will

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.

.....
NATIONAL STATE DIRECTOR, SAM SAMPANA
.....

I used to think being the Mayor of Scottsdale was the Best Job in the World. But then I discovered it was not: Being the *Former* Mayor of Scottsdale was the Best Job in the World. And now I know the real fact: being the first state director for Audubon is for sure the BEST JOB in the World! Thank you Maricopa Audubon for making me feel so welcome.

We are going to do great things together in Arizona. We have already been successful on several public policy issues. I believe our own Senator McCain provided true leadership in Washington as he broke ranks with most of his party and his President to vote against drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I had the opportunity to be with him recently in a quiet social setting and he thanked Audubon for supporting him on that critical decision! Very impressive – all the way around.

We are getting Important Bird Areas nominated from all over Arizona. Scott Wilbor, the IBA co-ordinator, is doing a tremendous job being certain that the process is made easy, and that Arizona gets the national prominence it so deserves for our unique habitats for birds. (Hey! We have one of the Top Ten Birding Trails in America right here in Arizona!)

We are working hard on identifying the first site in Arizona for an Audubon Center. We know it will be in Maricopa County, probably in central Phoenix. We are building on all the work done by Maricopa and Sonoran Audubon members in the last few years. We are meeting with federal agencies, state departments, county districts and city officials. But we will come to our Maricopa Audubon chapters with the recommendations first. Stay close – this will be very exciting!

I am SO enjoying this new job. I hope to be here for the next fifteen years! Please come by soon and see us! You'll be delighted by the wonderful donated magazines, furniture, rare and wonderful books. Birds in oil, rare prints, watercolor, ironwood, saguaro ribs, clocks, plush toys, cups, calendars, cartoons, pins and plaques. Bring a contribution or just come by to say hello and appreciate fellow Audubon members' generosity!

To end on a birdnote: I think watching the release of condors into the Vermillion Cliffs one windy February Day was my first authentic "birding" experience. (Well, you have to start somewhere!) I recently saw five of those same California Condors while hiking out of the Grand Canyon after a night at Phantom Ranch. They were exquisite looking up at them from Indian Gardens too.

Yes, we are going to do great things together in Arizona!

_____ to vote in favor of any resolutions presented at the annual meeting which he believes will increase democracy in Audubon.

_____ to vote for the transaction of such other business as may properly come before the meeting.

I hereby revoke any previous proxy executed by myself to authorize another to vote my proxy at the National Audubon Society December 7, 2002 or December 8, 2002, Annual Meeting of members.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I hereunto set my hand this _____ day of _____, 2002.

Signature

Print Name

.....
ATTENTION: ARIZONA EMPLOYEES!
.....

Help Maricopa Audubon Society Dramatically Increase its Donations with One Letter!

The **Maricopa Audubon Society** has expanded its audience to thousands of Arizona employees through workplace giving programs! Many concerned citizens that have never been involved with our organization are now learning about our work and having an opportunity to participate and donate to **Maricopa Audubon Society** programs!

Still most campaigns only include the United Way - campaigns are just beginning to include conservation & environmental groups. Employee letters are the key to opening up these campaigns to the **Maricopa Audubon Society** and many other excellent non-profit groups working on behalf of our State's environmental health and beauty!

Please take a few minutes to contact us* in and help make a big difference!

Email your name, phone number, and the name of your employer to: efaz@efaz.org (We will email a sample letter and answer any questions)

OR

Fill out the information on our web site: <http://www.efaz.org/CompanyLeads>

OR

Give the Environmental Fund of Arizona a call! (480) 969-3682

We will email a sample letter to you and contact you by telephone or email.

IMPORTANT: Your name will not be shared and will be used for the sole purpose of broadening your workplace giving campaign.

* The Environmental Fund for Arizona coordinates workplace campaigns for Maricopa Audubon Society



The Cactus Wren-Dition

Winter 2002/2003 • Volume 4, No. 4



Short-tailed Hawk

photographed by **Jim Burns** in the Chiricahua Mountains, AZ, August, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400 mm f/2.3 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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WINTER - 2002/2003 PHOTO QUIZ

By Jim Burns

THIS ISSUE'S CLUE—We first did crested birds in the summer of '01 and promised the next crested bird quiz would be harder. As part of this quiz, see if you can assign gender to these these birds even before you name the species. Two of these, as you can tell by comparing bill shapes, belong to the same family.



A) Good Photo, Easy Bird



B) Good Photo, Difficult Bird

C) Bad Photo,

AZ's SPECIAL SPECIES, RUFOUS-WINGED SPARROW

By Jim Burns



What is "the only common resident breeder in Arizona that has never been found in any other U.S. state?" The answer is Rufous-winged Sparrow, *Aimophila carpalis*. This interesting piece of state birding trivia was first posed on the internet last winter by Rich Hoyer, Wings tour leader from Tucson, and would seem to make Rufous-winged Sparrow the quintessential Arizona special species, a species truly found *only* here in our state.

Two factors conjoin to give Rufous-winged this unique status: it is non-migratory and it requires a habitat niche which has proven to be extremely narrow. That niche, extending southward from Tucson across the Mexican border through Sonora to northern Sinaloa, is a combination of flat terrain, tall grass, mesquite, cholla, and hackberry interspersed with bare ground. Tall grass--read "ungrazed or lightly grazed"--is the key ingredient. Where you find Rufous-winged Sparrows you will typically find Black-throated Sparrows, but you won't find Rufous-winged everywhere you find Black-throated because the latter is far more adaptable, apparently tolerant of overgrazing, and evolved to thrive in short grass and sparse grass habitats.

It is fascinating and instructive to view the grazing issue through the microprism of Rufous-winged Sparrow history in southern Arizona. The penultimate U.S. species to be discovered and described to science,

found ground foraging in small family groups in loose association with Black-throateds and overwintering flocks o Brewer's Sparrows. It is perhaps more readily found in early spring and again during Arizona's "second spring," after the monsoon rains have begun, when males tee up and sing from the tops of mesquites or patches of cholla. Nests are cups of dry grasses placed low in shrubs and cactus. In wet years two broods are raised.

Currently one of the easiest spots to find Rufous-winged Sparrow is in the washes around the hamlet of Continental below Madera Canyon. Park in the café/gift shop parking lot, cross the road and the rail line to the east and search the sparsely vegetated areas north and south along the tracks. If it is springtime, either first or second, listen for the distinctive song which consists of two high introductory notes followed by a lower, accelerating, monotone trill.

Other good strategies are to walk either the gravel 406 Road which loops off to the right along the main road up to Madera Canyon or the road into Chino Canyon where the pavement ends. Rufous-wingeds have also been found in Gardner Canyon north of Sonoita and in residential areas of Green Valley. Recent reports have come from the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum on the west side of Tucson and east of Agua Caliente Park on Tucson's far east side.

Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz Photo Quiz

AZ Special Species AZ Special Species AZ Special Species AZ Special Species AZ Special Species AZ Special Species



Easy Bird

Our first venture into the world of crested birds was made relatively easy by the bold facial patterns of the three highlighted species. Although the new sepia tone has immeasurably added to the visual panache of the newsletter, we are still basically working in shades of black and white and, with the exception of the eyering and undertail on our third bird, in this month's quiz we are dealing with rather plain birds in rather uniform plumage. None of these birds show us much pattern or contrast.

Birders are attuned to seeing more and/or more vibrant color in male plumage, but often fail to consider pattern and contrast, irrespective of color, as another and perhaps more important male gender marker. On this basis we might guess our first two quiz birds are females and the third is a male. Sibley refers to plumage patterns as tools of "passive communication: be which birds signal to others of their own species as well as to would be predators. Crests are certainly another of these tools. Birds, unlike birders, probably recognize and react to pattern and contrast rather than colors themselves. This is the underlying reason field trip leaders request dark, muted clothing and I often wear camouflage when I'm out with my camera.

[\(Continued on page 12\)](#)

Rufous-winged Sparrow was first found by Bendire in 1872 in the Tucson area, where it proved to be abundant. Cattle were introduced to the southern Arizona grasslands in the late 1880s, a final Rufous-winged specimen was taken in 1886, and then the species "disappeared" for nearly 50 years, presumably extirpated from the state and thus from the country!

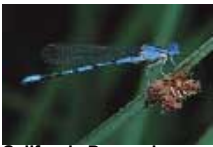
Another specimen was not found in Arizona until 1932 when the bird was rediscovered on the Papago Indian Reservation near the Baboquivari Mountains, and four years later birds were seen again in Tucson in areas that had been only lightly grazed or had not hosted cattle at all. Since that time Rufous-winged Sparrow has undergone a slow but steady increase as areas of its required habitat have been taken out of grazing rotations.

Despite its comeback, Rufous-winged Sparrow is still considered a local breeder. At this time of year it can often be

As you search for Rufous winged Sparrow consider why, besides its narrow habitat niche, it might have been such a late scientific discovery. It may well have been overlooked because of obvious plumage similarities with Chipping Sparrow with which it shares rufous crown and dark "mustache" marks.

Additionally, the wing patch for which the Rufous-winged is named is often or even typically hidden beneath that species' scapulars. But Chippies are *Spizellas*--skinny little sparrows with round crowns and notched tails--and Rufous-wingeds are *Aimophilas*--robust sparrows with flat crowns and long, rounded tails.

Though it may not be visually stunning like many of our state's special species, Rufous-winged Sparrow is a handsome sparrow and, by virtue of its singular and revealing biogeographical history in the state, well deserving of its cover status on Phillips, Marshall, and Monson's classic *Birds of Arizona*



California Dancer by
Pete Moulton

listserv have begun posting ode observations right along with their bird reports. And why not? Dragonflying is a lot like birding, after all.



Comanche Skimmer by Pete
Moulton

surrounding marshes attracting migrating wildfowl, wintering raptors, and passerines. Bring a spotting scope, if available, lunch and water.

Limit: 15
Difficulty: 1, if that. They don't get any easier.
Leader: Cindy West
(480) 830-5332
cwestbirdr@juno.com

Saturday, November 16 - Cottonwood. We will visit two or three locations near Cottonwood, including Dead Horse Ranch State Park and Tavasci Marsh. We will meet in the a.m. in northern Phoenix and carpool to Cottonwood. Expect to see a variety of residents and waterfowl. Contact leader for reservations and information.

Limit: 15
Difficulty: 2
Leader: Richard Kaiser
(602) 276-3312

Wednesday, March 12 - Southwest Phoenix. Visit several locations in search of Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and various raptors, passerines, and waterbirds. We will stop at El Mirage Pond, the 115th. Avenue bridge over the Gila, and farms along Broadway Road. Bring a lunch. Call leader for information and reservations.

Limit: 20
Difficulty: 1
Leader: Bob Witzeman
(602) 840-0052
No e-mails please.

Saturday, March 22 - Lost Dutchman State Park. This beautiful desert park lies at the base of the Superstition Mountain near Apache Junction. Bird feeders and baths make locating birds easy. Canyon Towhee and Pyrrhuloxia are regulars here. There is an entry fee at the park. Total of three miles to walk. Bring a lunch. Call leader for information and reservations.

Limit: 20
Difficulty: 3
Leader: Laurie Nessel
(480) 968-5614
laurienessel@hotmail.com

Please check the Christmas Bird Count List in the back for information on this year's Christmas Bird Counts.

Paloma Ranch Aug. 3 (TC), and at the pond s. of Ocotillo Rd. in Gilbert Aug. 25 (MS). Several Double-crested Cormorant nests with fledglings were observed at the heron nesting colony on Painted Rock Dam Rd. June 9 (HD) and about 20 were seen there July 6 (TC).

Least Bitterns were observed at the Tres Rios Cobble Ponds June 9 & 16 (PM,CD) and on June 29, a juvenile was seen there (TC), representing a new nesting area for the species. Two Least Bitterns were seen at the Tres Rios Hayfield Site June 7, 2001 (WT,HB). A **Reddish Egret** was discovered on the Gila River west of Hwy. 95 in w. Arizona Aug. 31 (DT) and remained at least until Sept. 4. Several Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets were found nesting at McClintock Rd. and the Salt River in Tempe June 15 (RWz,SB). Six Great Egrets, including a nest with young, 20 Snowy Egrets, including many fledglings, 70 Cattle Egrets, including fledglings, and 20 Black-crowned Night-Herons were all seen at the heron nesting colony on Painted Rock Dam Rd. July 6 (TC). Many Black-crowned Night-Herons were reported at Leisure World Lakes in early August (P&MM). A Wood Stork was discovered with the Am. White Pelicans near the Tonto Creek arm of Roosevelt Lake Aug. 20-21 (JE). A large number of 16 Black Vultures were observed on Baseline Rd., e. of 83 d Ave. July 13 (CB).

observed in Ahwatukee June 23 & 25 (PB).

A Clapper Rail (a rare local summer resident) was heard calling at 115" Ave. and the Gila River July 13 (CB). An early Sora was seen at the Gilbert Water Ranch Ponds July 28 (PD). A Sandhill Crane was found June 14 at Luna Lake in the White Mountains where one was found a year ago in July (TC *et al.*), well away from where the species is usually found and at an unusual time of year.



Brown Pelican by Jim Burns

Over sixty Black-necked Stilts with young were observed at the pond e. of the El Mirage Pond June 29 (TC) and adults with two downy young were found at the Air Force Pond s. of Gila Bend Aug. 3, representing a new nesting locale for the species (TC). A pair of Am. Avocets were seen with three young near the Tonto Creek arm of Roosevelt Lake (JE) and a pair with four or five young were seen there July 14 (TC), representing a new locale for this species.

[\(Continued on Page 11\)](#)

Mt. Ord July 25 (BD,AV,RWd). A late Willow Flycatcher was observed in Cave Creek June 9 and an early migrating individual was seen there July 27 (WT,HB); one found at the Roadside Rest Area in Wickenburg June 15 (PM,CD) may have been summering or nesting in the area. Hammond's Flycatcher was considered to be uncommon in late August, but it was found to be common on Mt. Ord Aug. 26 (SG). A late Pacific-slope Flycatcher was observed in a Scottsdale yard June 15-18 (JBa). Individual "Western" type Flycatchers were seen on the late dates of June 9 in Cave Creek (WT), and June 13 and June 27 at Whitlow Dam QBa). A Brown-crested Flycatcher, found in a n. Phoenix yard July 20 (CB), was unusual in an urban area away from its breeding locale.

Two late-staying Warbling Vireos were seen in Cave Creek June 9 (WT) and two more at Whitlow Dam June 13, with one remaining until June 27 (JBa). A Scrub Jay was seen at Whitlow Dam on the late dates of June 13 and June 20 QBa). A few Tree Swallows were observed at the Gilbert/Riggs Ponds and at the Gila Bend sewage Ponds on the early date of July 6 (TC); they are not commonly seen before late July or Auauust. A Mountain Chickadee that showed up in a central Phoenix yard July 31 was still present the end of August (TP); there were no previous summer records in the lowlands in the county. Two pairs of Bushtits were found nesting at a lower than usual elevation at Whitlow Dam June 13 (JBa). Phainopepla is rarely seen in summer, so of interest were the many seen at the Tres Rios Hayfield Site June 18, 2001, with a few still remaining July 22, 2001 (WT).

Individual late-staying N. Parulas were observed in Watson Woods, Prescott June 18 (CT) and at Whitlow Dam (JBa). A male **Tropical Parula** was discovered at Mesquite Wash June 2 (PM,CD), providing the first record for Maricopa County and only the third record for the state. A Townsend's Warbler was seen at the Wickenburg Roadside Rest on the late date of June 9 (PM,CD). A Black-and-white

seen off and on during the summer in the vicinity of Barfoot Park at least until Aug. 27. An immature **Purple Gallinule**, discovered at Sweetwater Wetlands July 26, remained until Aug. 14 and was the first to be recorded in the state since 1993. At least one pair, and perhaps two pairs of **Buff-collared Nighthjars** were discovered in California Gulch in mid-June. A **Plain-capped Starthroat** frequented a feeder in Ash Canyon, Huachuca Mts. from mid-July until Aug. 28. Two Magnolia Warblers were discovered: one at the Empire-Cienega Ranch June 19 and one in lower Carr Canyon June 23. A **Baybreasted Warbler** was found near Arivaca June 21. Individual **Kentucky Warblers** were observed in French Joe Canyon June 3 and in Whitetail Canyon June 23. The pair of **Rufous-capped Warblers** in French Joe Canyon nested successfully again - two young were seen with the adults Aug. 1. The **Flamecolored Tanager** remained in Miller Canyon at least until Aug. 22. (Records from s.e. Arizona courtesy of the Tucson Audubon Society weekly bird tape compiled by Bill Scott).

Farther afield, of interest was news from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that a pair of Aplomado Falcons successfully fledged three young from a nest in s.w. New Mexico the end of July, providing the first successful nesting of this species in the U.S. in over 50 years (*vide TC*).

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Gila Farms Pond (GFP).

Observers: Charles Babbitt, Jack Bartley, Pat Beall, Harvey Beatty, Scott Burge, Jim Bums, Josh Bums, Troy Corman, Bix Demaree, Henry Detwiler, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch, Cynthia Donald, Jeff Estis, Steve Ganley, Dan Green, Kathy Groschupf, Bill Grossi, Roy Jones, Chuck LaRue, Tracy McCarthy, Pete Moulton, Pea & Mark Mowry, Dave Pearson, Timona Pittman, Liz Roberts, James Smith, Mark Stevenson, Dave Taylor, Walter Thurber, Carl Tomoff, Jolan Truan, Anita Van Auken, Russ Widner, Robert Witzeman.

pointed bill; and a long tail. The bill is reminiscent of the waxwing in our previous crested quiz, and the length of the tail suggests this bird may be adept in flight, perhaps even catching insects on the wing- a berry and bug specialist.

Even if we dismiss as angles of light the hint of pale feathering in the throat area and the possibility of a wingbar in the deep shadow just beneath the branch, there is, after all, one discernible bit of contrast on our bird. Note the black pupil (all birds have black pupils) and the noticeable lighter iris. Lighter irises run the gamut from bright white (Acorn Woodpecker) too deep red (Bronzed Cowbird). Wee don't know if pupil/iris contrast provides information for this bird's mate, but it certainly catches the eye ob birders.

There are only two crested passerines of uniform color with a demoral eye. Bronzed Cowbird with its demonical red eye against black plumage (or gray-brown in the female) may come to mind, but even with its ruff distended, it would not display a crest of this shape, and cowbirds have heavier bills and shorter tails than our bird. This is one of tow members of the Ptilonotidae family recorded in the U.S. This is a "black cardinal," a Phainopepla, photographed in Tucson's Agua Caiente Park in March, 1999.

Since this is a female (the solid black male, with solid black throat and no wingbars, would have appeared much darker in this black and white rendition), I guess technically it is a

our deserts, but this bird is neither seen nor expected, and you haven't encountered it as you flip the pages of our field guides unless you have a Mexican book. This second member of the Ptilonotidae family has turned up north of Mexico only twice in my birding lifetime.

This is the male Gray Silky-Flycatcher which sojourned in El Paso in the winter of 1994-95. Two winters ago another was discovered in Southern California and was seen for several weeks. Both birds were initially considered possible escapees from the Mexican bird trade. Female Gray Silkies, like the females in this quiz, are much plainer than their males, uniformly gray-brown with the males, facial pattern, but lacking any color or contrast other than yellow undertail coverts.

I almost used a different crested bird for this slot in the quiz - a species somewhat more familiar, a very similar species of which I have very similar crummy photographs - Red-whiskered Bulbul. You would have fared better because you have at least a little more stored memory of bulbuls from your guide books event if you haven't been to south Florida, and bulbuls have more pattern and contrast than any of the birds in this quiz. It is fun and instructive form time to time in this feature to step outside your memory bank. We'll do it again.



Last updated: December 2, 2002



The Cactus Wren-Dition

Winter 2002/2003 • Volume 2, No. 4



Short-tailed Hawk
photographed by **Jim Burns** in the Chiricahua Mountains, AZ, August, 2002 with Canon EOS 1V body, Canon 400 mm f/2.3 lens and Fujichrome Velvia film.

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DUES SHARE

By Herb Fibel

What's with the Dues Share and Why Should I Be Concerned?

Just as we've arrived at what many of us agree is the quintessential printed voice of the Maricopa Audubon Society, the sepia-toned, twenty-page, thoroughly entertaining and comprehensively informative, Cactus Wren-dition, we are compelled to come face-to-face with the possibility that future renderings will hardly be recognizable as the same publication.

Although our shared membership with National Audubon is currently about 2,100 families and individuals, we feel fortunate if we see ten percent of these people involved in any of our many activities throughout the course of the year. This is typical, of course, of any organization. It is impossible to assess what impact, if any, the Wren-dition has in making the other ninety percent of our member-subscribers not only aware of the environmental problems in our world, but motivated enough to do something about them. I can tell you that based upon my own observations over the years, when we've sought reader feedback, not only for financial contributions, but even just for opinions, the results have been more than disappointing, they've been practically nil. Those are some of the downsides of sending out a newsletter to our membership, which last fiscal year cost us a little less than \$11,000.

On the positive side, though, it's nice to be able to say that the Maricopa Audubon Society is an organization of about 2,100 member families. Also, some moderately substantial bequests have been received as a result, possibly, of our suggestion to do so, which is a regular feature of the Wren-dition, and certainly some portion of our members who are currently participating in, and contributing to, our various activities, learned about these activities by reading about them in the Wren-dition. Sadly, at least in my opinion, however, many of the positive benefits of the Wren-dition can be accomplished in a much less expensive way-via our web page.

"What does all this have to do with the dues share?", you ask. Here's the connection. When you join the

was receiving, they were netting about \$2.38 a member. So, when they sent the chapters \$5.50 per member, they were actually going in the hole on their dues operation. Having concluded thusly, they notified the chapters that they were dropping the \$5.50 index figure and were going to start using the net figure, which will be recalculated each year. On the last dues share we received, the figure used was \$2.61. We have been told that it is possible that this number could come out to zero or less, down the road, and it is something over which we have no control.

As you can see, this is less than half of what we were receiving previously. The chapters were so incensed when they heard about NAS's plan, widespread protest occurred. NAS acceded to the protest by agreeing to phase in the new dues share arrangement. NAS decided that the first year we would receive our dues share based on the new formula, or 75% of what we would have received under the old formula, whichever was greater. The next year it would be 50% of the old formula or the new formula, whichever was greater. The next year 25%, and thereafter our dues share would be calculated annually based upon the new formula. In September 2001 we received a dues share check for \$8,692.97, which was the 75% figure. We have not yet received this year's dues share check, and I'm unable to find out how much it will be. I estimate that it will be \$5,795, but it could go as high as \$7,000, if this year's index figure is \$2.61 again.

It is increasingly difficult to predict our dues share amount, and with the check not coming until we are more than four months into our fiscal year, the problem is compounded. In fairness I should add that NAS also sends to us an additional \$20 for each new member generated by the chapter. In the past fiscal year, however, this amounted to less than \$300.

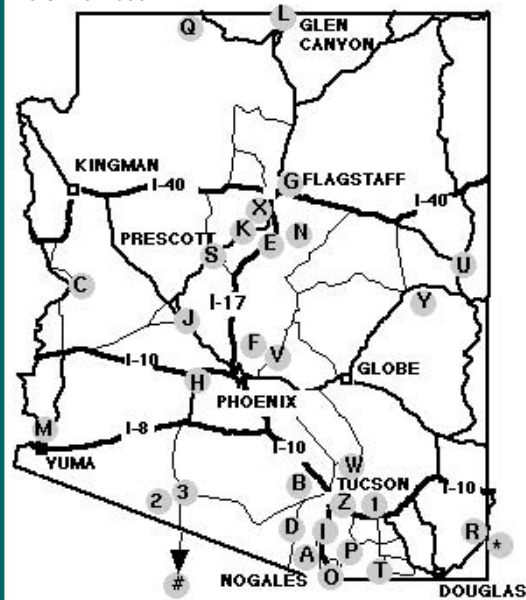
Are you still with me? Well, bless you for hanging in there, because I'm now coming to the point of this long epistle. Maricopa Audubon can no

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE

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.



Map Code	Count Name	Compiler	Phone
Saturday, December 14, 02			
A	Atascosa Highlands	Ken Kertell	520-327-3822
N	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022
#	Puerto Penasco, Sonora, MX	Steve Ganley	480-830-5538
W	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629
Y	Timber Mesa	Jimmy Videle	928-537-5144

Counts Christmas Bird Counts Christmas Bird Counts Christmas Bird Counts

National Audubon Society, and each year that you renew your membership, National Audubon sends a portion of your dues that you send to NAS to the chapter to which you have been assigned, based upon your Zip Code. This is known as the "NAS Dues Share". How much they send is based upon a complicated formula, which they've followed for at least the past 25 years. Simply stated, though, it came to about \$5.50 a year for each new member and renewed member, plus \$20 for each chapter-generated new member. Since 1991 it has averaged about \$15,000 a year. Oddly, although our membership numbers grew steadily over the last decade, dues shares were all over the map—from a low in '92-'93 of \$13,288 to a way above average \$24,418 in NAS's fiscal year '99-'00, the year that the other local chapter was formed. The following year our membership went from 3,300 to about 2,100, and our dues share dropped to \$13,139.

National Audubon Society formed a taskforce, which discovered that when National Audubon subtracted its cost of obtaining new members and of renewing old members from the dues it

longer send out even four issues of a newsletter to our 2,100 joint members that costs about \$2,200 an issue, when we only receive about \$6,000 total from National Audubon to provide all sorts of services to these 2,100 joint members! In addition to the newsletter we provide free monthly membership meetings, free field trips, and a public information phone line for our members. We also fund extensive conservation and environmental education activities.

Where do you think we should cut back? Those few of us who are willing to put time and effort into fundraising for the chapter, or into donating our precious spare time in other ways, would far rather see the fruits of our labors be used to educate youth and save our environment than we would to see the money go to financing a flashy newsletter that goes out to the 2100 members of National Audubon assigned to our chapter, the vast majority of whom we'll never see, and will never be able count on to help our chapter volunteers save birds, other wildlife, and their habitats.

So, please be prepared for major changes in the near future in the Cactus Wren-dition itself and in the way we furnish it to you.

Sunday, December 15, 02			
K	Jerome	Gary Romig	928-639-1516
Z	Tucson Valley	Susan Birky	520-743-9390
Monday, December 16, 02			
C	Bill Williams Delta	Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144
Tuesday, December 17, 02			
	Phoenix-Tres Rios	Daniela Yellan	602-942-7791
Wednesday, December 18, 02			
	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626
Thursday, December 19, 02			
V	Salt-Verde Rivers	Josh Burns	602-468-3002
Saturday, December 21, 02			
J	Hassayampa River	Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012
O	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778
X	Sedona	Dottie Hook	928-204-1894
Q	Pipe Spring Nat. Monument	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105
M	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-783-9468
Friday, December 27, 02			
H	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187
Saturday, December 28, 02			
3	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	David Griffin	619-445-9302
G	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Russell Balda	928-526-2865
I	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Matt Gable	520-578-2139
5	Havas NWR	Norma Miller	520-578-1399
R	Portal	Arnold Moorhouse	520-364-3178
T	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221
U	Saint Johns	Brian Heap	928-337-4865
Sunday, December 29, 02			
*	Peloncillo Mountains, NM	Alan Craig	520-558-2220
Monday December 30, 02			
E	Camp Verde	Carl & Ruth Breitmaier	928-282-1041
F	Carefree	Walter Thurber	480-483-6450
			619-

2	Sierra Pinta-Cabeza Prieta NWR	David Griffin	445-9302
Wednesday, January 1, 03			
S	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-636-6944
Friday, January 3, 03			
D	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251
L	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267
Saturday, January 4, 03			
	Baviácora, Sonora, MX	Arnold Moorhouse	520-364-3178
4	Dudleyville	Tracy McCarthey	602-973-0881
Unknown			
B	Avra Valley	George Montgomery	520-682-8530
6	Elfrida	Rob Hunt	
1	Saint David	Rob Hunt	

