



# The Cactus Wren • dition

Volume LVIII, No. 2

Summer 2008



Northern Parula

# Maricopa Audubon Meetings and Programs September–December 2008

Please join us for another exciting year of speakers covering a wide range of topics – African predators, condors, cranes, birds of Alaska, Fossil Creek, Cape May and more!

Meetings are held on the 1st Tuesday of each month, September through May. Our May meeting is our Annual Banquet with a location to be announced. Please check our web site or newsletter for the location of the May 2008 banquet.

Meetings start at 7:30 p.m., and feature a general membership meeting, guest speaker, sales tables, refreshments and a chance

to socialize with MAS members. Visitors are most welcome! Our September through April meetings are held in Dorrance Hall at the Desert Botanical Garden. The Garden is located at 1201 North Galvin Parkway in Phoenix, which is approximately ½ mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. Dorrance Hall is located off the main parking lot and entry to the Garden. There will be signs directing you to the meeting. Although there is no charge to attend our general membership meetings, the Annual Banquet does require a dinner reservation and associated cost.

Program Schedule for Fall 2008

Sep 2, 2008

Michelle Harrington "The Verde River"

Oct 7, 2008

Peggy Turk-Boyer The Center for the Study of Deserts and Oceans (CEDO)

Nov 4, 2008

NO MEETING - ELECTION DAY!!!

Dec 2, 2008

David and Diane Reesor "Panama and Costa Rica"

## Committees/Support

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"Man's greatest joy is to teach the love of nature." Anon

## An Investment in the Future

Bequests are an important source of support for the Maricopa Audubon Society. Your chapter has dedicated itself to the protection of the natural world through public education and advocacy for the wiser use and preservation of our land, water, air and other irreplaceable natural resources.

You can invest in the future of our natural world by making a bequest in your will to the Maricopa Audubon Society. Talk to your attorney for more information on how this can be accomplished.

## From the Editor, Deva Burns

The Maricopa Audubon Society board elections are over and the results are in. The new Board is listed in two places in this issue—on the back page and on page 3. The national elections are really heating up and I can hardly wait until they too are over. Are you like me and feel that they have already been going on forever and can't believe they are so far in the future? Be that as it may, as Audubon members we should be aware of the conservation stances of our elected officials. Bob Witzeman gives some real insight into this in his conservation article.

Also in this issue, Jim Burns has given us quite the challenge with the Photo

Quiz. As usual there are three species to identify. However, the catch is, there is only one photo! Both Walter Thurber and Herb Fibel have submitted Field Trip Reports. I would really like to encourage the Field Trip leaders to turn in reports. I know I enjoy reading them and I am sure others do too. And on the subject of Field Trips, Laurie Nessel has put together, with the help of all you Field Trip leaders, a nice line up of trips to take us through the summer. And don't forget to check out Janet Witzeman's list of all the sightings in her very detailed "Field Observations".

Good birding to all of you!



Northern Parula, photographed by Jim Burns at the Gilbert Water Ranch, AZ, January 2008, with Canon 1D body and Canon 600mm f4 lens.

This has nothing to do with anything, except that it gave me a chuckle at the time, and I want to share this bumper sticker with you: "Yes, this is my pickup, and no I won't help you move."

What can be more joyful, when things aren't going particularly well, than to look out your window and see a new life yard bird, or to go out birding with a friend and turn up a brand new bird to add to your life list?

I attended a conference the other day for another non-profit group in which I'm involved, and one of the major topics for discussion was finding people to take over leadership roles. It occurs to me that this is a universal problem, not only one for Maricopa Audubon. With the exception of our elections two years ago, we have had to literally beg people to step up and help. If we relied on people calling someone on our nominating committee to volunteer to run, there would be huge gaps in people

serving on the board of Maricopa Audubon.

Are term limits the answer? Maricopa Audubon has never had term limits, and we've been criticized for this. If this is the solution to the problem, why has one Arizona Audubon chapter with term limits gone forward for most of the past two years with no president or vice-president? Actually, if one looks at the websites of the other chapters in the state, most of which have term limits, one notes that most of the chapters have board vacancies. One notes as well that most of the people who participate in the Arizona Audubon Council are the same people who have participated for the last 20 years. In the other organization to which I referred above, we have a dynamo running the group. When her term ends in a year, there is no one in sight who might possibly take over, and the group is in danger of folding. In fact, she took over from a president who was well into his third

term even though that group has a two term limit.

We are accused at times of having a clique running Maricopa Audubon, which resists bringing in new people, and that this is what keeps new people from volunteering. The fact is that I tallied up the number of people who have served on the MAS board since I've been involved in MAS, and there have been 91 different board members.

I think there is a volunteerism crisis in this country. If I am re-elected as your president, this will be my 9th year serving in that capacity. I intend to devote much of my energy in the coming fiscal year to finding my replacement. I am, as you also should be, deeply grateful and indebted to all of those over the years who have served in leadership roles with Maricopa Audubon, and to all of the others, who have kept every non-profit organization functioning for the benefit of all Americans.

## Election Results

For the first time ever, we are able to announce the results of our annual Board elections, which took place at our April 1st General Membership Meeting, in the summer edition of the Cactus Wren-dition. Laurie Nessel moved over to Program Chairperson, leaving the position of Field Trip Chairperson open:

- President.....Herb Fibel
- Vice President..... Robin Silver, MD
- Treasurer ..... Mark Horlings
- Secretary..... Peggy Booth
- Field Trip Chairman..... Open
- Conservation Chairman ..... Robert Witzeman, MD
- Program Chairperson.....Laurie Nessel
- Membership Chairperson.....Jack Follett
- Education Chairperson.....Mark Larson
- Publicity Chairperson.....Fred Stewart

The final Board Member, the Editor, according to our Bylaws, is selected by the new board at its first meeting.

# Notes & Announcements

May 3–4 Bed, Breakfast and Birds —a study of Ancient Journeys - Bird Migration from Besh-Ba-Gowah Archaeological Park to Pinal Peak. Join Kathe Anderson for late afternoon birding and a 45 minute class Saturday evening, plus a complimentary Sunday morning field trip to Pinal Peak. Bird migration has been studied since the time of Aristotle, and the class is designed to enlighten and enrich our understanding of these wondrous ancient journeys. Sponsored by Noftsgers Hill Inn Bed and Breakfast Double occupancy rooms at Noftsgers Hill Inn range from \$90 to \$125 plus tax, including breakfast. 20% discount for second consecutive night booking for this special event. Additional per person fee of \$40.00 for the Saturday birding and class. For complete details about the Bed, Breakfast & Birds package, call Rosalie Ayala toll-free 877-780-2479 or 928-425-2260, or visit the website [www.noftsgerhillinn.com](http://www.noftsgerhillinn.com). These birding weekends were arranged thanks to attention focused on the Pinal Mountain range by Arizona Republic columnist Jim Burns. The author of - North American Owls - highlights 7,800 foot Pinal Peak among his top five birding spots close to the Phoenix area and to Kathe Anderson, a Scottsdale resident who leads many birding trips. \*\*Read about the Inn in April's Travel & Leisure magazine!!

June 4 – 8 6th Annual Potholes & Prairie Birding Festival —Carrington, ND; sponsored by Birding Drives Dakota. Join nationally known birding experts Bill Thompson, III, and Julie Zickefoose of Bird Watcher's Digest as we explore the prairie pothole region of central North Dakota for the Baird's Sparrow, LeConte's Sparrow, Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow, Sprague's Pipit, Piping Plover, Ferruginous Hawk, Clark's Grebe, Red-necked Grebe and many, many more! Check out Julie's article about her birding experiences in North Dakota at - [http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/travel/north\\_dakota.aspx](http://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/site/travel/north_dakota.aspx). For a festival overview and fee schedule, check out the [festival registration form](http://www.birdingdrives.com/08Festivalregform2pg.pdf) at <http://www.birdingdrives.com/08Festivalregform2pg.pdf>.

For a complete, detailed festival agenda, click here: <http://www.birdingdrives.com/2008completeagenda.pdf>. Email or call for more information. Birding Drives Dakota, P.O. Box 26, Jamestown, ND 58402-0026, (701) 952.5871 or 1.888.921.2473 or [info@birdingdrives.com](mailto:info@birdingdrives.com) or [www.birdingdrives.com](http://www.birdingdrives.com)

June 2008 Peruvian Amazon —Rusty Johnson is an Amazon "detour" guide, wildlife lecturer, and author; utilized by the National Audubon Society over the last 18 years. This will be a bird watching tour to my family's village in the Peruvian Amazon. This area of rainforest is considered to be the birthplace of the Amazon River and contains over 500 bird species. What makes the tour one of a kind is that Rusty is married to an Amazonian native and has developed a tight bond with the local people. As a result the traveler will not be treated as a tourist. When you travel with Rusty you are considered family and are immersed into the Amazon life. This provides an extremely rare, interactive experience with to one of the most beautiful places, culture, and people on earth. This is a trip of a lifetime! No experience is necessary, all ages welcomed, and the tour is adapted to each travelers needs and interests. In addition to birding there is a long list of other activities to experience and remember forever. (Visit: [www.EcologyChanel.com](http://www.EcologyChanel.com) to view the list.) If you would like to learn more about Rusty's Amazon adventure detours please feel free to contact him personally at EcologyChannel.com or [Rusty@TwilightoftheWild.com](mailto:Rusty@TwilightoftheWild.com) or 845-331-6750.

Art Classes Audubon Arizona and Scottsdale Artists' School are joining forces this fall to teach beginners how to record birds the way John James Audubon did – by drawing. Three weekend classes in sketching, watercolor, and scientific illustration are offered at \$150 each. For details, go to <http://www.ScottsdaleArtSchool.org> or <http://az.audubon.org> or call Scottsdale Artists' School at 480-990-1422.

November Member Meeting – Due to the National Election this meeting is canceled. We urge you to vote. Please help make more than 25% of the registered voters in this country decide the direction our country is to take for the next 4 years.

E-mail alert system – Maricopa Audubon Society has established an e-mail alert system to notify members of upcoming events and activities. E-mail addresses were obtained from both the "Friends of Maricopa Audubon" roster and the National Audubon roster. There were several addresses that were returned, most likely because the e-mail addresses were not updated. If you would like to be included in or removed from this notification system, please let Jack Follett know at [jackfollett@msn.com](mailto:jackfollett@msn.com). The list will only be used for the stated purpose and not sold or used for any other reason.

Birding Community E-Bulletin – A monthly bulletin with rare bird sightings and other birding information. If you would like to be put on the monthly emailing list please contact either Wayne Petersen (Director of the Massachusetts Important Bird Areas Program) at 718-259-2178 or [wpetersen@massaudubon.org](mailto:wpetersen@massaudubon.org) or Paul Baicich at 410-992-9736 or [paul.baicich@verizon.net](mailto:paul.baicich@verizon.net). They never sell the recipient list and you will receive a lot of interesting information.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum carpool website —<http://btacarpool.proboards74.com> Car pool and save gas when visiting the Arboretum. Just check out the website for details.

Casa Del Caballo Blanco EcoLodge - Belize A new six-cabana, eco-friendly accommodation in Belize - Casa del Caballo Blanco is a 23-acre former ranch 9.5 miles from the Guatemalan border near San Ignacio. It also shelters the not-for-profit Casa Avian Support Alliance (CASA) (<http://www.casaavian.org/>). Its purpose is to understand and support the biodiversity of Belize that attracts and sustains over 530 species

# Notes & Announcements

of migratory and resident birds spotted in a given year. Jodi and Vance Benté, owners of the property, also established The Alliance whose motto is: "Birds are the farmers of the world - help us to help them continue to sow their seeds." Their work has been undertaken in cooperation with the Government of Belize's efforts to protect critical habitat, the loss of which threatens the avian population. Guests are invited to share in the responsibilities of supporting the avian program. They can assist in nest-box building, maintenance and feeding as well as trail building and signage. A percentage of each cabana rental will be donated to the CASA center to assist with medical and other expenses related to the management of the facility. Casa also organizes day-long tours that in addition to an educational and scientific focus can include bird-watching, horseback riding, cave tubing and visiting archeological and World Heritage Sites in Belize and Guatemala. For more information, call 707-974-4942 or visit [www.casacabaloblanco.com](http://www.casacabaloblanco.com).

**Book Store Selections** – We now have a selection of books on birding topics for adults and children alike. Remember that Friends of Maricopa Audubon members get a 10% discount and that your purchase helps to support our event, education and conservation efforts.

**Arizona Watchable Wildlife Tourism Association (AWWTA)** – Check out their website for events around the state —[www.azwildlife.com](http://www.azwildlife.com).

**Museum of Northern Arizona** – They sponsor Venture trips that explore and discover the Colorado Plateau in the Four Corners area. For more information contact Lisa Lamberson at 928-774-5211 x241 or [llamberson@mna.mus.az.us](mailto:llamberson@mna.mus.az.us).

**Environmental Fund – Green At Work** —Thousands of employees can now support Maricopa Audubon Society (MAS) in their annual fall charity campaign. The Environmental Fund for Arizona get thousands of Arizona

employees involved with our group and many other conservation groups through payroll deduction workplace campaigns. Help spread the word at your office about checking off "Green" choices this fall! If your employer does not yet include environmental/conservation groups, please contact Solange Whitehead at the Environmental Fund for Arizona: [efaz@efaz.org](mailto:efaz@efaz.org) or (480) 510-5511.

**Donation Wish List** – Maricopa Audubon Society is looking for a donation of a laptop computer in order to provide educational presentations to youth groups and classes. To donate please contact any board member.

**Credit Card** – The American Birding Association has negotiated an agreement with US Bank to provide ABA members a distinctive US BANK VISA Card. Using your card will not only show your connection to ABA and birding but also, at no additional cost to you, provide a contribution to ABA. If interested, contact [www.americanbirding](http://www.americanbirding). I think Audubon should offer something like this!

**The Dovetail Directory** ([www.dovetailbirding.com](http://www.dovetailbirding.com)): The Directory is an online catalogue of world birding tours, and our goal is to help birders locate that special birding tour, to any of 85 countries around the world. This is a free service. There are no hidden costs or surcharges. Tours are offered at the operators price. In addition to tours, the Directory also carries a comprehensive inventory of birding-related books. For your further convenience we maintain a North American, toll-free number (877) 881-1145, and someone will always happy to take your call.

**Shade-grown coffee:** If you are searching for a source to purchase shade-grown coffee and haven't been successful, try ABA Sales. They carry seven kinds of Song Bird Coffee. For information call 800-634-7736. Also, Trader Joe's carries shade grown coffee, as does Sunflower Market. Another source is Toucanet Coffee/Avian

Ecologist. They are in the business of serving Smithsonian certified, bird-friendly coffee. All of their varieties are organic and shade grown. They also have fair trade varieties. Please visit [www.toucanetcoffee.com](http://www.toucanetcoffee.com) for more information about their goals or to place an order. The website also includes an online community for bird and/or coffee lovers. They invite you to join. Another website for shade grown/organic coffee is [www.cafebritt.com](http://www.cafebritt.com). An additional website is Thanksgiving Coffee Co. —[www.thanksgivingcoffee.com](http://www.thanksgivingcoffee.com) or 800-648-6491.

More birding and nature festivals. [www.americanbirding.org](http://www.americanbirding.org). and [www.birdinghotspot.com](http://www.birdinghotspot.com).

**Maricopa Audubon T-Shirts** – T-shirt Sale: MAS T-shirts are on sale at cost. Large and XL-\$9.00, XXL- \$12.00. Shipping \$5. Lot's of colors to choose from. Contact Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614, [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.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.

# Thick-billed Kingbird

Jim Burns

There's nothing quiet and inconspicuous about this tyrannus, and Thick-billed Kingbird is one of the few species whose scientific and common names match up with one another and with the bird's most prominent physical feature. The species name *crassirostris* combines the Latin words for "thick" and "beak." Though not widespread and only local in Arizona during nesting season, birders should have no trouble finding, seeing, and identifying Thick-billeds.

The reasons are that in the few places Thick-billeds are known to nest, they have been regular for years, often using the exact same tree in multiple seasons, and around the nest they are busy and obstreperous. Thick-billeds arrive in Arizona about the second week of April and leave for Mexico around the middle of September. There are fall and winter records of this species from western Arizona and southern California, but it is far less prone to post-breeding out-of-range dispersal than Tropical Kingbird. Normal Thick-bill range runs south into Guatemala.

If you go to "The Rest Area" south of Patagonia in May or June and fail to see *Tyrannus crassirostris*, you need to immediately upon your return home get in to see your ophthalmologist and your ENT. A likely scenario is that as you climb from your vehicle, a kingbird will explode from the top of the tallest sycamore and quiver climb straight upward nearly to the height of the eastern cliff face, SNAP (you'll have no trouble hearing this massive bill closing on insect prey) up an unseen flying object, then flutter down into the foliage of another tall sycamore, calling noisily all the while.

There will be Cassin's Kingbirds and Brown-crested Flycatchers around, but the instant you hear the raucous, interspersed combinations of shrill squeaks (some observers equate this part to a "rubber ducky") and burry, two-syllable "buzzzz-EEEE"s, you'll know you have your Thick-bill. Phillips, Marshall, and Monson in *The Birds Of Arizona* declare this "Arizona's loudest bird," and since it seems to sally up and out more frequently and higher than others in its family, you should have no trouble seeing it or having to wait very long for the next performance.

Thick-billed Kingbird has been an Arizona special species only since 1958 when it was first discovered nesting in Guadalupe

Canyon in the far southeastern corner of the state. It has since become a regular breeding bird there and has also nested in the New Mexico portion of that canyon as well. It can also be found in the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, along Arivaca Creek, and in lower Sycamore Canyon. It has nested as far north as Dudleyville, and as far west as the foothills of the Baboquivaris, and obviously favors riparian areas with tall sycamores and cottonwoods. One year a pair famously nested in the huge pine

tree in the entrance circle to the Kino Springs clubhouse.

The Thick-billed nest is the expected cup of twigs and fibers but, like its builder, is large, sprawling, and messy, easily seen though constructed quite high (50-60 feet) in the tallest trees because small branches may protrude at odd angles making it appear even bulkier than it is. Reminiscent of the crude affair built by doves, eggs of the Thick-bill can sometimes be seen through the unfinished bottom of their nests. Unlike most tyrant flycatchers, mated Thick-billeds seem to spend "quality" time together after copulation, often perching side-by-side and calling back and forth. Incubation is done by the female, and both parents bring food to the nest.

The Thick-billed diet is similar to other kingbirds, with large flying insects being the staple, but it is quite likely that its huge bill enables this species to feed on the largest prey more consistently than its congeners. It regularly takes cicadas, the biggest beetles, and I have seen this species, too, engaged swallow-like, skimming along across the top of a stock pond snapping up dragonflies just inches above the surface of the water.

Like other Tyrant Flycatchers, Thick-bills will aggressively defend against any

predators seen as threatening to the nest or young. I once encountered a pair bringing food to a recently fledged juvenile clinging to a branch about thirty feet up in a mesquite along Sonoita Creek. The parents and I, at about the same time, discovered a large rattlesnake, attracted by the young bird's begging, accessing the lower branches of the fledgling's tree over a large log propped against its base. My initial, visceral instinct was to look for a long stick with which to discourage or redirect the rattler, but I needn't have bothered. The adult Thick-billeds were immediately all over the snake with fly-bys, bill snapping, wing-beating, and several actual hits on its non-business end. This was a raucous dust-up, feathers flying, rattles thrashing about, but it didn't last long. The snake quickly dropped back to the ground and with the parents' insistence, the fledgling flopped precariously off into another tree.

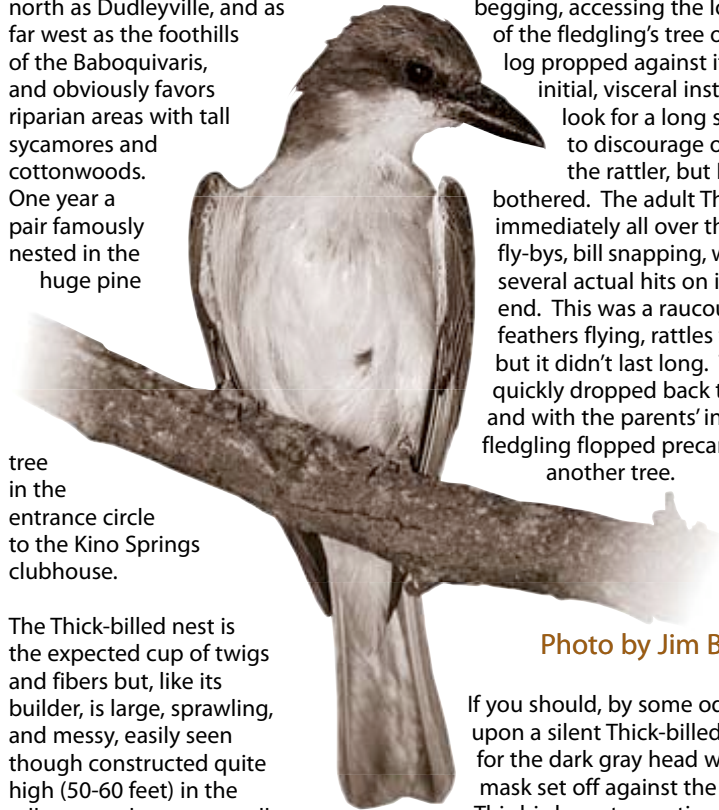


Photo by Jim Burns

If you should, by some odd chance, come upon a silent Thick-billed Kingbird, look for the dark gray head with its black mask set off against the white throat. This bird sports a noticeably thick neck, too, presumably to help support its oversized bill. The head will be peaked at the rear, and breeding summer birds will show little or no yellow on the dirty white underparts. This is a field mark apparent only on first fall birds and fresh fall adults, which might possibly resemble Tropicals. If you see the bill, there will be no mistake. If you see the yellow crown patch, you know you have had a rare and privileged look.

Thick-billed Kingbirds are a recent, interesting, and welcome addition to Arizona's list of special birds, and they seem to be slowly increasing. At the Arivaca Cienega it is now possible to see four species of tyrannus in a single morning, and fifteen species of flycatcher have now been recorded at The Rest Area. Maybe geography isn't really the only reason for Thick-billed's special status. Maybe it's special because it is the most regular and easily identifiable of those fifteen. It will certainly be the first one you hear when you leave your vehicle.

# Photo Quiz

Jim Burns

## THIS ISSUE'S CLUE —

It's been three years since we did a Photo Quiz with three species in the same frame, but this isn't a great photo with three easy birds like "The Triplets" in the Winter, 2005 issue. The scene in our quiz photo this month is one that's repeated over and over again throughout Arizona during June. Let me assure you there are three different species in this photo. One is easy, one is very difficult, and the third appeared not too long ago on the cover of the Wrendition doing something its family is notorious for doing--the same thing it's doing in this photo.



All Photos by Jim Burns

# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Laurie Nessel

May – September 2008

## CAR POOLING:

Maricopa Audubon Strongly encourages carpooling on field 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 field 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 and scope if recommended

\*Day Passes Required for National Forests. Many favorite spots in our National Forests now require Day Use Passes. You are responsible to acquire a day pass (\$6) in advance of field trips with an asterisk (\*). Passes are available by phone or mail, at FS district and ranger offices, Big 5, some Circle K's, the Shell station at Tom Darlington and Cave Creek Road and elsewhere. Visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/tonto/tp/where.shtml> for more information.

Impromptu Birding Trips: Post your own outings or get notified of others planned field trips on short notice. Founded by naturalist Mike Plagens, membership is easy, free and open to those who have an interest in the flora, fauna, and ecology of Arizona. Not just a trip listing, view the website for trip reports, flora and fauna databases, maps, links to google earth including Gilbert Water ranch, and photos. Trips focus on plants, animals, mycology, geology, biology, entomology, herpetology, ecology, paleontology, birding, anthropology or microbiology. Share expenses, experiences and expertise with like-minded travelers. Proposed trips should include a brief description of the destination, ways, means, purpose, hiking difficulty, departure location, date and time. Drivers and riders will negotiate

between themselves any shared expenses, but it is recommended that riders at least cover the cost of gas. Users can share via e-mail questions and experiences they have encountered while hiking through the wonders of Arizona's landscapes. [http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az\\_nature\\_fldtrips/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/az_nature_fldtrips/)

## Saturday, May 10

\*Usery Mountain and Blue Point: Hilltopping Insects. Join Dr. John Alcock for a peek inside the fascinating world of insects. We will start with some early morning birding at Blue Point. Then we will head to Usery Mountain Recreation Area (\$6 per vehicle fee) for a walk around the Merkle Trail, to see if male tarantula hawks are on territory at a local hilltop in the park. Other hilltopping insects are possible such as certain butterflies and flies that wait at these locations for mates. Limit: 15. Difficulty: 2 (gentle climbing in the heat). Meet at the entrance to Blue Point Recreation Site, 6:15am. A \$6 Tonto N.F. or Golden Eagle Pass is required, purchased in advance. Carpooling is encouraged.

Leader: Dr. John Alcock  
Reservations and Carpooling:  
Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614,  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

## Monday, May 19

Prescott: We'll visit the Highlands Center, plus Watson Woods and a couple of lakes, depending on time and temperature. Possible bonus site at a B&B in nearby Walker, on the backside of the Bradshaw Mountains; hope for a nice variety of summer birds (tanagers, warblers, vireos, flycatchers) actively singing and building nests. Bring water and lunch. Return around 3-4PM. Limit 2 cars. Difficulty 2. Mostly wooded trails but some uneven footing. 2-3 miles walking. Minimal fees at Prescott's parks; bring about \$4. Meet 5AM behind Petco at the Pavilions Shopping Center, Scottsdale.

Leader: Kathe Anderson. 480-951-4890 or [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for information and reservations.

## Saturday, May 24

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Bring binoculars (close focal point preferred). Call leader for info on good, inexpensive field guides, or use the leader's book. Learn to identify Painted Lady, Giant Sulphur, Queen, Buckeye, Giant Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies; Desert Firetail, Blue-ringed Dancer,

Northern Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer and Bluet dragonflies and damselflies. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. No reservations. Difficulty 1

Leaders: Pete Moulton and Cynthia Donald

## Saturday, June 7

Hassayampa River Preserve Birds and Breakfast (walk first, breakfast afterwards) at 6:30am. Entry fee \$5 for members of the Nature Conservancy, \$10 for others. Limit 15 people. Difficulty 1. Bring water, hat, binoculars. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Kathe Anderson, 480-951-4890 to carpool from Scottsdale  
To register, call the Hassayampa River Preserve at 928-684-2772

## Sunday, June 8

Mesquite Wash/Sunflower/Mt. Ord. We will explore several areas along the eastern edge of Maricopa County. We will start at Mesquite Wash and look for Brown-crested Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, and Summer Tanager. Indigo Bunting was seen here on last year's NA Migration Count. Then on to Sunflower where we should see Common Black-Hawk and Zone-tailed Hawk, along with more riparian species. As the day heats up we will head for Mt. Ord where we should see Gray Vireo and Rufous-crowned and Black-chinned Sparrow and have a chance at Scott's Oriole in the chaparral. Then up high where we will welcome the cooler temps while we look for a variety of warblers, including Painted Redstart, Grace's, Black-throated Gray, Virginia's and Olive, as well as Western and Hepatic Tanager. Bring lunch, snacks and plenty of water. We will eat at the water trough on Mt. Ord. End around 2-3PM. Difficulty 2-3, 1-2 mile hike. Meet 6:00AM at Denny's, SE corner of Shea and Saguaro Blvd. in Fountain Hills.

Leader: David Powell, 602-441-5508, [vireo@vireos.com](mailto:vireo@vireos.com) for reservations.

## Saturday, June 14

Hart Prairie Preserve, Flagstaff. Sightings of Clark's Nutcracker, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Warbling Vireo, Western and Mountain Bluebirds and Williamson's Sapsucker are possible. It should be really beautiful this year with all the snow and water. Bring lunch, snacks, water. Difficulty 2 (fairly easy hike at high altitude). Meet 7:30AM at the Museum of Northern Arizona, north of Flagstaff on US180.



# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

Leader: Charles Babbitt,  
602.840.1772, [Charles.Babbitt@old.maricopa.gov](mailto:Charles.Babbitt@old.maricopa.gov) for reservations, information and any changes.

## Saturday, June 14

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch. Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson.  
480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

## Saturday, June 21

Butterflies – Finding, Identifying and Photographing along the Arizona Trail, Mogollon Rim. Maricopa Audubon Society members are invited to join the Arizona Trail Association hike a part of the AZ/Highline trail in pursuit of colorful butterflies. As the temperature rises, the flowers start to bloom higher in elevation. Butterflies follow this nectar flow upwards and June is the perfect time to check them out. Abundant bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) attracts Fritillaries. Orange milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) and thistle (*Cirsium* spp.) are also nectar feeding butterfly magnets. Blues mud-puddle at springs along the trail. California Sister and Weidemeyer's Admiral are mostly found on trees. Wear sturdy shoes and a hat. Bring water, snacks, a sack lunch and a pair of close-focusing binoculars. The trail is moderately steep in places, but we will take our time. Meet at Denny's on Shea Blvd in Fountain Hills at 6:30 a.m. or at the trailhead at 8 a.m. To get to the trailhead, drive ¾ mile past the Highway 260 intersection and turn right onto Houston Mesa Road. Cross all 3 water crossings. After about 8 miles turn left at the stop sign. The road turns into dirt. After about 2 miles, turn right toward Shadow Rim Camp and Washington Park Trailhead. Follow this road up about 6 miles until the right turn-off to the Washington Park Trailhead (marked). After a bit, turn left (signs again) and you will find the trailhead well marked.

Leader: Marceline VandeWater (with Wendy Hodgson)  
Reservations: Wendy Hodgson,  
[whodgson@dbg.org](mailto:whodgson@dbg.org) or (480) 481-8108)

## Saturday, June 21

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. This area is outstanding for stunningly beautiful butterflies, dragonflies and damselflies. Bring binoculars (close focal point preferred). Learn to identify Painted

Lady, Giant Sulphur, Queen, Buckeye, Giant Swallowtail, Pipevine Swallowtail butterflies; Desert Firetail, Blue-ringed Dancer, Northern Pondhawk, Flame Skimmer and Bluet dragonflies and damselflies. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada just south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1

Leaders: Pete Moulton and Cynthia Donald

## July, date TBA

Herp Walk. Monsoon evenings under cloud cover are the best time to find snakes, lizards and other herps. We are delaying setting an exact date for this trip until the monsoon has begun and conditions are right. We will build a list of email addresses and phone numbers and contact you, probably the morning of the walk.

Laurie Nessel, 480.968.5614,  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com) to get on the call list.

## Saturday, July 12

Birding 103; the E's and F's of Basic Birding, Part 1. Boyce Thompson Arboretum. This workshop is one of Kathe Anderson's series on beginning birding: Environments and Families. Class size is limited, sign up early. 7:00 AM - 10:00 AM (90 minutes in classroom, 90 minutes in the field). Pre-payment and advance registration required 520.689.2723, [BTInfo@ag.arizona.edu](mailto:BTInfo@ag.arizona.edu). Registered participants check in at Visitor's Center. BTA Members \$20.00; Non-Members \$27.50. This is one of two sessions; ask about a discount if you can only attend one.

Instructor: Kathe Anderson.

## Sunday, July 13

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch. Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson.  
480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

## Saturday, July 19

Tiger Beetles and Shorebirds, Willcox. With a broadening interest in organisms,

we will plan a combined field trip that involves a collaboration of NABA butterfly clubs from Phoenix and Tucson and the Maricopa Audubon Society. This field trip will accommodate those with an eye for shorebirds and tiger beetles. Willcox and the Sulphur Springs Valley are among the best places in Arizona for fall migrating shorebirds, and with 18 species of tiger beetles, it has one of the highest diversities of tiger beetle species in North America, including several endemic species and subspecies- a veritable paradise!

Depending on the monsoon rains and extent of moist conditions, we will spend Saturday exploring ponds, grasslands, and the Willcox Dry Lake Bed for its feathered and chitinized denizens. You are likely to see parts of the Sulphur Springs Valley you have never birded or insected before (there are great herps here, too).

From Phoenix, the drive is about 2-3 hours to Willcox, and if you prefer to drive down the night before (Friday, 18 July), we will meet everyone at 8 am in Willcox Saturday morning at the lake of the Twin Lakes Golf Course. Turn S.E. (right) onto Hi. #186 at the stop light on S. Haskell Ave, go over the train tracks and in a 1/4 mile turn south (right) at the Twin Lakes Golf Course sign. Drive past the golf course restaurant and pro shop and enter the parking area at the entrance to Lake Circle Drive and wait there.

We will visit the permanent lake shore, temporary ponds hidden away in the grasslands, and drive out onto the playa. Bring your binoculars, spotting scope, camera, hat, bag lunch, water bottle, and bird and tiger beetle\* field guides. There will be very little shade the entire day, but as we are at 4,500 ft elevation, the temperatures, while warm, will not be at Tucson or Phoenix levels. We will probably finish about 2 pm or so. Start dreaming and studying about Cochise and Ocellated Tiger Beetles, Baird's Sandpipers and Red-necked Phalaropes. Limit 15. Difficulty 1.

\*"A Field Guide to the Tiger Beetles of the United States and Canada", Oxford Univ. Press, 2006, Pearson, Knisley and Kazilek

Leader: Dr. David L. Pearson, School of Life Sciences, Arizona State University  
Reservations and carpooling:  
Laurie Nessel 480-968-5614,  
[laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com)

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# Maricopa Audubon Society Field Trips

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field trips

## Saturday, July 19

Hassayampa River Preserve Birds and Breakfast (walk first, breakfast afterwards) at 6:30am. \$5 for members of the Nature Conservancy, \$10 for others. Limit 15 people. Difficulty 1. Bring water.

Leader: Kathe Anderson, 480.480-951-4890 to carpool from Scottsdale. To register: Hassayampa River Preserve 928-684-2772

## Saturday, July 26

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) assists in the control of insect pests and in turn are a food source for birds. They breed in water but can be found far from it. GWR has proved to be a very productive odonata habitat. Their remarkable morphology, brilliant colorations and curious behaviors inspire and amaze observers of these fascinating aerialists. The GWR is S.E. of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Meet 7:00AM at the Dragonfly Ramada, south of the east side of the parking lot. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Call leader for info on good, inexpensive field guides, or use the leader's book. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1.

Leader: Bob Witzeman, 602.840.0052 for information.

## Saturday, August 2

Butterflies of Box Canyon, Pima County: We will explore the Greaterville/Box Canyon Road, along with Box Canyon itself for butterflies. Box Canyon is a well known area for monsoon season butterflies. Assuming normal rainfall we should see 40+ species and many of them may be quite abundant. Among the species we might see are Eleda and Tiny Checkerspot, Palmer's Metalmark and Leda Ministreak, Bordered Patch, Juniper Hairstreak, Common Streaky-Skipper, Arizona Skipper, Acacia Skipper, and a variety of pierids, including Mexican Yellow, Tailed Orange, and Cloudless Sulphur. Meet 5:30 location TBA. Bring lunch, snacks and plenty of water. Finish in the canyon 2-3:00PM. Back to Phoenix around 5:00PM. Difficulty 3. 1-2 mile hike. Meet at the SE corner of Fry's Electronics lot, 2300 West Baseline Road Tempe, north of Baseline Rd. just west of I-10.

Leader: David Powell, 602-441-5508, [vireo@vireos.com](mailto:vireo@vireos.com) for reservations and carpooling.

## Saturday, August 16, Sunday, August 17 (optional)

Mt. Graham: We have not visited this highest point in southeastern Arizona, in the Pinaleno Mountains and Coronado National Forest, for many years. This is the site of the telescope building controversy during the past two decades, fought in large part by one of our leaders and conservation chairman, Bob Witzeman. As we climb up the mountain, we will visit the various campgrounds, picnic areas, creeks and grassy areas to include Snow Flat and Treasure Park, and Riggs Lake at the top. Bird species we will look for include Band-tailed Pigeon, Northern Goshawk, Cordilleran Flycatcher, Mexican Jay, Grace's Warbler, and Yellow-eyed Junco. We will also look for the endangered Mt. Graham Red Squirrel. Meet at 7:30 A.M. at the entrance sign to Roper Lake State Park on Route 191 just south of Safford. Meet 7:00AM Sunday at Hospital Flat for optional second day of birding. Lodging also available in Safford.

Co-Leaders: Richard Kaiser 602-276-3312 or [rkaiserinaz@aol.com](mailto:rkaiserinaz@aol.com) for reservations and Bob Witzeman

## Saturdays, August 23, September 27, October 25

Beginning Butterflies and Dragonflies at Gilbert Water Ranch. Odonata (dragonflies and damselflies) assists in the control of insect pests and in turn are a food source for birds. They breed in water but can be found far from it. GWR has proved to be a very productive odonata habitat. Their remarkable morphology, brilliant colorations and curious behaviors inspire and amaze observers of these fascinating aerialists. Look for Flame Skimmer, Red-tailed Pennant, Red Saddlebags, Familiar Bluet, Mexican Amberwing and Blue Dasher. The GWR is SE of Guadalupe and Greenfield Rds. Meet 7:00AM (August and September) or 8:00AM (October) at the Dragonfly Ramada, south of the east side of the parking lot. There is a suggested \$5 donation to support the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Bring binoculars (close-focus preferred), water, and hat. Common Dragonflies of the Southwest by Kathy Biggs will be available for sale for \$10. No reservations. Difficulty 1.

Leaders: Bob Witzeman (8/23 and 10/25) 602.840.0052 or Laurie Nessel (9/27)

## Saturday, August 23

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch.

Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson. 480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

## Saturday, August 23

Page Springs. We will visit the Page Springs fish hatchery and bird other nearby locations. Possible sightings of Yellow-billed cuckoo, Wood duck, Western and Cassin's Kingbird, summer warblers and possibly the Republican nominee for president at his summer home. Spotting scopes are helpful. Bring lunch. We will meet near Cornville at 8:00AM and break up in the early afternoon. Limit 15. Difficulty 2.

Leader: Herb Fibel for information and reservations, 480.966.5246, [herbertsfibel@aol.com](mailto:herbertsfibel@aol.com)

## Saturday, September 13

Sonoita Creek Natural Area. We will hike both riparian (3,750') and upland areas of the 5,000-acre site adjacent to Patagonia Lake State Park. More than 130 species of butterflies and 315 species of birds have been documented there. To control human impact and maintain a wilderness experience, only a limited number of permits are granted daily. Park Ranger Bill Adler will lead us on a 5 mile, 4 hour loop trail to look for Black, Gray, and Zone-tailed Hawks, Western and Summer Tanagers, migrating warblers, tanagers and grassland species. Botanist may want to reserve time to peruse the herbarium in the Visitors Center, open 7AM-5PM daily. Meet 8:00 at the Visitors Center. Bring snacks, water, lunch, hat, scope, hiking shoes. Return to trailhead mid-afternoon. Option to cover the upper birding trail along the lake for a few hours if people are interested. Limit 8 people. Camping available at Patagonia Lake State Park. Park entry fee is \$7/carload. Difficulty 2, easy but long hike.

Leader: Ranger Bill Adler  
Reservations (required): Laurie Nessel [laurienessel@gmail.com](mailto:laurienessel@gmail.com), 480.968.5614

## Sunday, September 14

Bird Walk at Gilbert Water Ranch. Meet 6:00AM south of the parking lot, east of Greenfield Rd. off Guadalupe Rd. in Gilbert. \$5 fee goes to the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

Leader: Kathe Anderson. 480-951-4890, [kathe.coot@cox.net](mailto:kathe.coot@cox.net) for reservations (required).

**A Land Ethic changes the role of Homo Sapiens from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow members and also respect for the Community as such.**

Aldo Leopold "Sand County Almanac"

In the last issue the Cactus Wrendition focused on sun coffee vs. shade coffee and pointed out sun coffee's harmful effect upon our Neotropical migratory birds which nest here in North America but winter in the neotropics. It was pointed out that if your coffee package does not specifically say it was "shade" or "organic" or "fair trade" coffee it likely received insecticides and/or herbicides harmful to North America's Neotropical migrants.



Standing beside this "Apache Leap Day" 2008 parade banner (1. to r.) are Apache Elder Mary Anderson, Apache Miss San Carlos Loraine Cooley, Junior Miss San Carlos Edith Starr; and Sylvia Barrett and Henry Munoz of the Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition. The banner's caption honors the 77 Apache "freedom fighters" who in the 19th century jumped to their death from the "Apache Leap" cliffs above Superior, AZ rather than face capture by the U.S. Cavalry. Today many Native American tribes and environmental organizations oppose the proposed destruction of this Forest Service land by the British/Australian Resolution Copper Company mining consortium.

This time we will look at another reason for the seriously dwindling number of Neotropical migrants returning to the U.S. every spring. Vegetables, fruits, and grains grown in Latin America often use insecticides and herbicides that are harmful to wildlife and illegal in the U.S. A recent article in the New York Times by Yale University biologist, Bridget Stutchbury, pointed out that bobolinks wintering on rice fields in Bolivia had drastically reduced levels of cholinesterase. The farmers there are able to spray their crops with pesticides whose use is banned or highly restricted in the U.S. Our North American migratory warblers, Eastern Kingbirds, Barn Swallows and Bobolinks have undergone declines in recent years. A single application of some pesticides in South and Central American croplands can kill seven to 25 songbirds per acre, Stutchbury pointed out.

Bananas are grown using huge pesticide loads. Although this is not usually a risk to the consumer, it has grave results to songbirds where the chemicals are sprayed. Stutchbury points out that almost no melons, green beans, tomatoes, bell peppers and strawberries grown in Latin America can be grown without heavy loads of pesticides and that few of these crops are grown organically. So we must avoid consuming non-U.S. crops grown

out of season unless they are labeled organic.

Each year the League of Conservation Voters (LCV) publishes a scorecard of how each U.S. Congressman voted on key environmental bills which came before Congress. The best voting record of any of Arizona's Congresspersons was Congressman (Democrat) Harry Mitchell (Scottsdale, Tempe, Fountain Hills, Paradise Valley). He voted correctly (100%) on all 15 of those LCV litmus test environmental votes. Arizona Democrat Gabrielle Giffords of Tucson was in second place with 95%. Democrats Raul Grijalva of Tucson and Ed Pastor of Phoenix were next with 90%. Of Republicans, Jeff Flake was 15%, Rick Renzi 10%, and Trent Franks and John Shadegg had the poorest records with only 5% each. Republican Senator Jon Kyl scored 13% while Senator John McCain had a 0% record. He abstained from voting on all 15!

McCain's aides argued that his 0% record with 15 voting abstentions of all 15 of those critical LCV votes was because he was busy campaigning. This was not factual. In fact, he was present in Washington for 43% of those LCV votes. He simply refused to show up to vote on them either pro or con. Campaigners Obama and Clinton missed being present 40% and 27% respectively, but they both managed to show up and vote (favorably) on 11 out of 15 of those key LCV environmental votes.

McCain also demonstrated his harmful environmental record by sponsoring the Resolution Copper Company congressional land exchange legislation in the Senate last year. It would give two foreign mining companies 3025 acres of environmentally and culturally priceless U.S. Forest Service Land near Superior, Arizona. The mine imperils habitat for several "watch-listed" and also for many other noteworthy bird sightings. It seriously impacts many miles of priceless Sonoran Desert riparian habitat, a highly local, habitat of a highly endemic, federally endangered cactus species, and multiple Native American historical and religious sites. It likewise destroys thousands of acres of USFS land within the Superior/Boyce Thompson area's annual Christmas Count circle. Worst of all, McCain's legislation slams the door on public oversight and scrutiny by exempting the mine from our nation's most important environmental protection law, the National Environmental Policy Act!



Booth of the Concerned Citizens and Retired Miners Coalition and San Carlos Apache tribal members at Superior, Arizona on "Apache Leap Day" March 29, 2008. They and many U.S. environmental organizations are opposed to the proposed Resolution Copper Company's Congressional land swap legislation. It would destroy the land surrounding the U.S. Forest Service's Oak Flat campground along with its historical, cultural, environmental and recreational values.

# Field Observations

Janet Witzeman

DECEMBER, JANUARY, &  
FEBRUARY 2008

**G**reater White-fronted Geese (formerly considered to be rare and irregular in winter) continued to increase in numbers. At least 22 individuals were reported (compared with five recorded the previous winter). Up to eight were counted along the Verde River at Ft. McDowell Dec. 12-14 (KR,RJ), a second individual joined the one at McCormick Ranch Dec. 27 and both remained through the period (PD,JSm et al.), six were counted at Palo Verde Dec. 26 (SB), two were reported at the Pavilions ponds Dec. 30 (PD), four were counted at Sun Lakes Jan. 19 (TC), and one was seen at Crystal Gardens in Avondale Feb. 1 (JT).

Snow Geese also seemed to be wintering in higher numbers than usual. One was present all winter at the Dave White Golf Course in Casa Grande (m.ob.), at least ten were counted in fields near McCormick Ranch in Scottsdale during the period (m.ob.), three were observed at the Higley Rd. ponds Dec. 15 (ML), individuals were reported on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC), at the Moon Valley Golf Course Jan. 19 (DPo) and Sun Lakes Jan. 19 (TC), and two were reported along Arlington School Rd. Jan. 24 (RH). Two Ross's Geese were observed at GWR Dec. 2 (MM), and individuals were reported at ponds on the Gila River Indian Reservation Dec. 15 (ML), at Cave Creek Jan. 19 (DPo) and at Sun Lakes Jan. 19 (TC). The resident Ross's Goose at Chaparral Park (since fall 2006) remained at least until Jan. 27 (JSm et al.).

Among the over 1000 Canada Geese wintering in the Scottsdale area were a Giant Canada Goose (a new race for Arizona) at the Pavilions ponds and up to two Giant Canada Geese and 15 Lesser Canada Geese at McCormick Ranch (PD). Three Lesser Canada Geese were also observed at GWR Feb. 12 – 24 (PD,MM) and two at the Pavilions ponds Dec. 30 (TC). A total of 21 Lessers were counted during the PAABS Jan. 19 (fide TC). Three subspecies of Cackling Goose were identified: between one and two Richardson's at McCormick Ranch Dec. 30 at least to Feb. 2 (TC,PD), one Taverner's at McCormick Ranch Feb. 2 (PD), and the three Cackling Geese at Sun Lakes Jan. 19 included one tiny dark breasted minima (TC). Also five to seven Lesser Canada Geese were reported with over 100 Common Canada Geese at Crystal Gardens Feb. 10 (MH).

Four immature Tundra Swans (casual winter visitors) were discovered at GWR Dec. 16 (PD) and an adult was observed at Palo Verde Feb. 8 through the end of the period (DPo,JBu et al.). Four swans (sp?) were seen flying over during the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC). At least 18 Wood Ducks (more than usual) were reported at various ponds in the Phoenix area during the period (m.ob.). Three Eurasian Wigeons wintered at Scottsdale ponds: the female at Paradise Cemetery remained at least until Jan. 8 (PN), and individual males were found at ponds on Hayden Rd. and next to Buster's Restaurant (TC et al.).

Up to three "Mexican" Mallards continued to be seen at GWR during

the period (MM). Individual Blue-winged Teal (rare to uncommon in winter before mid-February) were found at GWR Dec. 2 (MM), at PRD Dec. 2 (MW), in Mesa Jan. 19 (PN), and two were seen at the Higley Rd. ponds Dec. 15 (ML). An impressive total of 39 were counted on the Phoenix-Tres Rios CBC Dec. 20 (fide DPo). More than the usual number of Greater Scaup (usually rare winter visitors) were reported: a male and female were found at Saguaro Lake during December (KR,DPo), a pair at Red Mountain Ranch in Mesa Jan. 19 (PN), plus individuals at Gila Bend Power Plant Jan. 10 (PL), at ASU Research Park Jan. 14 (RF), at Kiwanis Park, Tempe all winter (MS), and at a pond in n.e. Phoenix Jan. 19 (TC).

The White-winged Scoter, discovered at Saguaro Lake in November, was found there again Jan. 10 (TC) and provided the first January record for Maricopa County. A first winter Long-tailed Duck, a casual winter visitor, was found Dec. 28 at the Dave White Golf Course in Casa Grande (TJ), where it remained at least until Jan. 28 (m.ob.). Greater than usual numbers of Common Goldeneyes were reported during the period: 25 at the Gila Bend Power Plant Dec. 3 (MW et al.), 19 on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC), and 42 tallied during the PAABS Jan. 19 (fide TC). As usual, large numbers of Hooded Mergansers were found wintering on lakes and ponds in the greater Phoenix area: 71 were counted during the PAABS Jan. 19 (fide TC). Four Red-breasted Mergansers (uncommon winter visitors) were found during the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC), eight were counted on Apache Lake Jan.

18 (TC), and two were observed on the Val Vista Lakes in Gilbert Feb. 15 – 25 (MM).

A Common Loon (an uncommon winter visitor) was found on Tempe Town Lake Jan. 18 - 19 (MW).

A Horned Grebe (a rare winter visitor) was discovered on Bartlett Lake Jan. 11 (TC). Large numbers of Am. White Pelicans wintered in Maricopa County: at least 100 were counted at PRD Dec. 2 (MW), at least 54 were recorded along the Salt River west of 91st Ave. Dec. 20 (TC, JJ, DF), and at least 75 more were reported at several ponds in the greater Phoenix area (m.ob.). Individual immature Brown Pelicans were found wintering in Maricopa County: at the Gila Bend Power Plant Dec. 3 (MW), at Tempe Town Lake Dec. 11 (RK), at a pond near PRD Dec. 9 (KK), at ponds w. of Price in Chandler Dec. 16 – Jan. 23 (JMn et al.), and at a park pond in Chandler Jan. 6 (DC). Numbers of Neotropic Cormorants continued to rise in Maricopa County: 1000 were conservatively tallied on the Phoenix-Tres Rios CBC Dec. 20 (fide DPo), 330 on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC), and 1357! were counted during the PAABS Jan. 19 (fide TC).

Individual Am. Bitterns were found at Rio Salado Dec. 31 at least to Feb. 17 (TG) and at the confluence of the Salt and Gila Rivers Feb. 23 – 28 (THId, THII).

Six Ospreys, counted at Tempe Town Lake Dec. 1, remained through December and early January and at least two were still present at the end of the period (MW). Several Ospreys were reported at 91st Ave. and the Salt River Dec. 16 (TC) and

16 were recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC). A White-tailed Kite (an uncommon visitor) was observed in Arlington Valley Jan. 24 (RHa). A Bald Eagle was seen for the second consecutive year at McCormick Ranch away from its usual haunts Feb. 14 & 17 (MB, TC). An adult Harris's Hawk was observed at Avondale Blvd. and the Salt River Dec. 16; the species is rare in the Gila River valley (TC).

Individual Red-shouldered Hawks (casual winter visitors away from the HRP) were discovered at 91st Ave. and the Salt River Dec. 16 (TC) and along Queen Creek in Pinal County Feb. 14 (JSh). Four Red-shouldered Hawks were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 14 (fide VM). Individual Zone-tailed Hawks (casual winter visitors to the lowlands) were observed flying over ASU Research Park Dec. 23 (RDu), over south Scottsdale Feb. 18 (JBU), and in Peoria Feb. 18 (SA). Two Harlan's Hawks were recorded on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC). A Rough-legged Hawk (a rare winter visitor) was discovered in Arlington Valley Dec. 22 (MH) and continued to be seen at least until Jan. 24 (RHa et al.). A Golden Eagle (seldom seen in the lowlands) was observed during the Gila River CBC (fide TC).

An unusually large number of 750 Sandhill Cranes (normally irregular winter visitors) were reported s. of Gillespie Dam Feb. 1 (MK). Between four and two wintering Am. Avocets were found at the Lower River Rd. ponds in Palo Verde Dec. 9 – 27 (MH) and another two were seen at the Narramore Rd. pond Dec. 9 (MH). Numbers of Am Avocets at GWR increased from four Feb.

10 (PD) to several pairs Feb. 17 (MW), indicating new spring arrivals. The N. Jacana at the Dave White Golf Course in Casa Grande (there at least since the fall), remained through the period and provided the fourth record for the state (m.ob.).

About four times more Greater Yellowlegs than usual were found wintering s.w. of Buckeye: 190 were recorded in flooded fields on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (TC, MH, DPo, RHa); another 52 were tallied during the PAABS Jan. 19 (TC et al.). There were more Lesser Yellowlegs as well (usually no more than one or two of this rare winter visitor are found); up to four were reported in the Arlington area during December and January (MH, LHt, RWd, DPo, TC, RHa). Higher than usual numbers of Long-billed Curlews were found s.w. of Buckeye during the period: 213 were recorded on the Gila River CBC (fide TC). A Ruff, discovered along Arlington School Rd. Dec. 22 – 26 (MH et al.) and observed periodically through Jan. 25, provided only the third record for Maricopa County.

A first winter Franklin's Gull was discovered at Kiwanis Park Dec. 8 (R&AT) and remained at least until Dec. 22 (HF, PM, PD, MS, JSm); there were no previous winter records for Maricopa County. A Long-eared Owl (a rare winter visitor) was found at Rio Salado Dec. 9 (LHt et al.). A Short-eared Owl (an uncommon winter visitor) was observed at GWR Dec. 25 (JiMc et al.). A N. Saw-whet Owl (a casual visitor to the lowlands) was discovered at BTA Jan 11 – 17 (RDi et al.); there have been

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# Field Observations

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three previous records at that location.

Several Broad-billed Hummingbirds and the Violet-crowned x Broad-billed hybrid present at BTA, remained through the period (m.ob.).

Individual Lewis's Woodpeckers were reported at Rio Salado from late November at least to Dec. 9 (TG), at Ft. McDowell Dec. 15 (KR), and in Peoria Dec. 17 at least to Jan. 14 (BIn et al.). The Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, present at BTA in the fall, remained at least until Jan. 22 (EH,RHo) and another individual was found at Oak Flat Dec. 29 (PM,CD). A probable Red-breasted Sapsucker (a casual winter visitor) was photographed s.w. of 107th Ave. and the Salt River Dec. 15 & 20 (TC et al.); photos were submitted to the AZ Bird Committee. A female Williamson's Sapsucker (a rare winter visitor) was discovered at Organ Pipe Cactus Nat'l Monument in s.e. AZ Dec. 2 (DG). The Hairy Woodpecker, reported at Whitlow Dam in October, was observed there again Dec. 6 (JBa).

A Hammond's Flycatcher (an uncommon winter visitor) was found near Needle Rock along the Verde River Feb. 17 (ML). For the third consecutive year a Bell's Vireo remained for all or part of the winter at GWR – this year until at least Jan. 25 (MM et al.). Two Cassin's Vireos (uncommon winter visitors) were noted on the Salt-Verde Rivers CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR) and another was observed at BTA Jan. 2 (PN). Between two and three W. Scrub-Jays were found at Whitlow Dam Dec. 6 & 28 (JBa), and individuals were reported at BTA and Devil's Canyon Dec. 19 (EH), and at Sunflower Jan. 13 (EH).

Numbers of wintering Tree and N. Rough-winged Swallow have been increasing the past six or seven years; ten Tree Swallows and 46 N. Rough-winged Swallows were recorded on the Gila River CBC (fide TC); smaller numbers of Tree Swallows were reported at GWR, Rio Salado, Fountain Hills, and Gila Bend (m.ob.), and 50 N. Rough-winged Swallows were counted at GWR during January (MM). Individual Violet-green Swallows were observed at Ft. McDowell Dec. 9 & 14 (JJ,TC) and early migrants at GWR Feb. 14 – 16 (MM). For the past six years Cliff Swallows have been arriving in early February (instead of early March in previous years); this winter the date of the first to arrive at GWR was Feb. 11 (MM) and the date of the first arrivals at Rio Verde was Feb. 17 (TB).

Two Cave Swallows were discovered during the period: one at the Dave White Golf Course in Casa Grande Dec. 9 (PL et al.) provided the first record for Pinal County and one at GWR Feb. 9 – 21 and possibly through March 2 (BGc. et al.), provided only the second record for Maricopa County. There have been only five previous state records. A few Barn Swallows (uncommon in winter) were reported: three on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), one on the Gila River CBC (fide TC), and four in Gila Bend Jan. 10 (PL).

The Mountain Chickadee first reported at Whitlow Dam in November, was seen there again Dec. 6 (JBa) and another individual was observed at Ft. McDowell Dec. 14 (EH). Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to be widespread through

the period: two in Peoria (BIn), one each at Ft. McDowell (EH), HRP (CF), BTA (JBa), and several in Tempe (m.ob.). Two White-breasted Nuthatches continued to be seen at Whitlow Dam at least until Feb. 28 (JBa). A Brown Creeper continued to be seen at Whitlow Dam through the period (JBa), one was observed near 107th Ave. and the Salt River Dec. 15 & 20 (TC), two continued to be seen at Eldorado Park at least to Jan. 16 (JBa), seven were recorded on the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), a high of 27 were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 16 (fide CF), two were recorded on the Gila River CBC (fide TC), and two remained at HRP through the period (MH,LHr et al.).

A Winter Wren (a rare winter visitor) was discovered at Rio Salado Dec. 15 and remained at least until Dec. 31 (TG,JaMc): another three were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC (fide CF). Golden-crowned Kinglets continued to be more common than usual: one of the three at Whitlow Dam remained at least until Dec. 6 (JBa), one was reported at Rio Salado Dec. 9 (TG), four were recorded during the Salt/Verde CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), a high of 36 were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 16 (fide CF), three were found along Lower Camp Creek Jan. 2 (TC), a high of 11 were counted along Queen Creek upstream from BTA Jan. 4 (EH), two were found at BTA Jan. 10 (EH), and three remained at HRP through the period (MH).

Part of this winter's invasion of higher elevation species to the lowlands was a Townsend's Solitaire found at HRP Jan. 2 (MH). A Varied

Thrush was discovered at Rio Salado Dec. 24 (HB) and remained at least until Jan. 28 (DPe et al.). A Sage Thrasher (an uncommon winter visitor) was found at Sunflower Jan. 13 (EH). The Brown Thrasher, back at BTA for the eighth consecutive winter, continued to be seen there, at least until Feb. 17 (JBa et al.).

The late-staying Lucy's Warbler at GWR remained through the fall until the late date of Dec. 2 (MM); there have been only three previous December records for Maricopa County. An immature female N. Parula was discovered at GWR Dec. 14 and remained through the period (MM et al.). Numbers of wintering Yellow Warblers have been increasing in recent years and even more than usual were reported this winter: individuals were found at GWR Dec. 2 – 20 (PM et al.), along the lake by Buster's Restaurant in Scottsdale Dec. 2 (TC), on the Salt-Verde Rivers CBC Dec. 14 (fide KR), s.w. of Buckeye Dec. 24 (fide TC), and at Rio Salado Dec. 30 (TG); two were observed along the Salt River w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 16 & 20 (TC et al.), and three were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 16 (fide VM).

A "Myrtle" Yellow-rumped Warbler (an uncommon winter visitor), first found at GWR Nov. 20 (SG), remained through the period (MM,PM et al.). A Townsend's Warbler (an irregular winter visitor), discovered along Lower Camp Creek Jan. 2 (TC), provided the second record for the Carefree CBC; it remained at least until Mar. 1 (WT et al.). An immature male Black-and-white Warbler (a rare but regular winter visitor) was found along the Verde River near Needle Rock Feb. 17 (ML).

A Worm-eating Warbler was discovered at HRP Feb. 22 (MH); there have been nine previous county records. A N. Waterthrush (an uncommon winter visitor) was recorded during the Salt/Verde CBC (fide KR). Individual Wilson's Warblers (casual to rare winter visitors) were found along Indian Bend Wash, Scottsdale Dec. 2 (TC) and along the Salt River, w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 16 (TC). Individual Painted Redstarts (uncommon winter visitors in the lowlands) were observed at BTA Jan. 2 - 4 (PN,EH) and in Tempe Jan. 19 – 21 (LHI,SG).

A male Summer Tanager (a casual winter visitor) was found in a neighborhood adjacent to the Heard Museum, mid-town Phoenix Dec. 8 (LHt). Three Western Tanagers (casual winter visitors) were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 16 (VM) and one was found along the Salt River w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 20 (TC et al.).

Two "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrows continued to be seen at GWR at least until Dec. 3 (BW) and one remained there at least until the end of the period (RDi,MM); one was reported at HRP Feb. 16 –23 (LHr,DVP,KR,DPO), one was observed at Oak Flat Dec. 29 (PM,CD), and the one in a Scottsdale yard since October, was last seen there Dec. 30 (JBa). A Swamp Sparrow (an uncommon winter visitor) was found at a pond along the Agua Fria riverbed Dec. 16 (TC). Individual White-throated Sparrows (uncommon winter visitors) were discovered at Rio Salado from mid-November at least to Dec. 29 (TG), at Ft. McDowell Dec. 15 (KR), and in the BTA residential area Jan. 4 (J&SH).

An individual "white-lored" Pacific form of White-crowned Sparrow was observed at Rio Salado Dec. 8 – Jan. 25 (MM et al.). A Golden-crowned Sparrow (an uncommon winter visitor) was discovered during the Carefree CBC Jan. 2 (GL,TL).

The Pyrrhuloxia (at GWR since November) remained through the winter (MM,RDi), one was reported at BTA Jan. 4 (CF), and one was found at the Desert Botanical Garden Jan. 16 (CO). The Painted Bunting (found at Rio Salado Nov. 24) remained through the period (m.ob.).

A female Rusty Blackbird was discovered at Rio Salado Dec. 30 (TC) and remained at least until Jan.6 (HB,LHt,BH,ME); there were only four previous county records; this was the first for December.

Numbers of Cassin's Finches and Red Crossbills (irregular winter visitors) continued to grow from late October and early November when they first appeared as part of the invasion into the lowlands. A pair of Cassin's Finches were observed at Seven Springs Dec. 5 (LHt,RWd), 16 were counted during the Carefree CBC Jan. 2 (fide WT), two were seen at the BTA residential area Jan. 4 (CF), and four were observed at Sunflower Jan. 13 (EH). Individual Red Crossbills were reported flying over a n.e. Phoenix yard Dec. 6 (TC), at GWR Dec. 20 (JSm), in Moon Valley Jan. 19 (DPo), and in Paradise Valley Jan. 19 (TC); 25 Red Crossbills were counted along Queen Creek upstream from BTA during the Superior CBC Jan. 4 (EH), more than

continued on page 16

# Field Observations

continued from page 15

15 were reported at HRP Feb. 16 (LHr,DVP), and up to 18 were found at BTA during the period and into March (CT).

Small numbers of Lawrence's Goldfinches (irregular winter visitors) were reported in the Phoenix area during the period: two were found along the Verde River at Ft. McDowell Dec. 14 (RJ), six were observed along the Salt River w. of 91st Ave. Dec. 20 (TC), eight were seen in a Scottsdale yard Feb. 17 (BlS), six were reported at Phon D. Sutton Dec. 24 (HF), and individuals were seen at feeders in yards in Chandler Jan. 17 (WJ) and Scottsdale (AS). A high of 23 Lawrence's Goldfinches were recorded on the Hassayampa CBC Dec. 16 (fide VM) and 53 were noted on the Gila River CBC Dec. 27 (fide TC). Individual Am. Goldfinches (uncommon winter visitors) were found near 107th Ave. and the Salt

River Dec. 15 (TC) and at HRP Feb. 16 (LHr,DVP); three were observed w. of 91st Ave. and the Salt River Dec. 20 (TC et al.) and six were found at Oak Flat Dec. 29 (PM,CD).

Abbreviations: Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), Christmas Bird Count (CBC), Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR), Hassayampa River Preserve (HRP), many observers (m.ob.), Painted Rock Dam (PRD), Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic Bird Survey (PAABS).

Observers: Scott Atkinson, Steve Barlow, Jack Bartley (JBa), Mary Berkley, Harold Bond, Terry Brodner, Jim Burns (JBu), Dale Clark, Troy Corman, Pierre Deviche, Rich Ditch (RDi), Cynthia Donald, Robert Dummer (RDu), Mike Erickson, Rob Fergus, Dave Ferreira, Herb Fibel, Craig Fischer, Steve Ganley, Tom Gaskill, Doug Green, Brendon Grice (BGc), Ron Haaseth (RHa),

Jerry & Sherry Hammon, Lauren Harter (LHr), Liz Hatcher (LHt), Melanie Herring, Bill Higgins, Tom Hildebrandt (THId), Terry Hill (THIl), Eric Hough, Rich Hoyer (RHo), Lori Hurley (LHI), Brenda Inskip (BlIn), Brian Isson (BlS), William Jenisch, Tom Johnson, Justin Jones, Roy Jones, Keith Kamper, Melody Kehl, Richard Krebill, Mark Larson, Paul Lehman, Grant Loomis, Tyler Loomis, Jon Mann (JMn), James McKay (JaMc), Jimmy McMoran (JiMc), Vanessa Montgomery, Mike Moore, Pete Moulton, Phil Norton, Charles Oldham, Dave Pearson (DPe), Dave Powell (DPo), Kurt Radamaker, Myron Scott, John Schulte (JSh), Allison Shock, James Smith (JSm), Ron & Ann Thomas, Walter Thurber, Carl Tomoff, Jolan Truan, David Vander Pluym, Magill Weber, Russ Widner (RWd), Barb Winterfield.





## 16th Annual Carefree Christmas Bird Count – January 2

-- Some 71 field observers and 10 feeder watchers teamed up to find 105 species and 8,866 individual birds. The species total equaled our second best record but the individual count was the lowest since December 2000. Morning clouds coupled with winds lasting all day kept bird activity down.

There were no new species for the count this year so our cumulative total remains at 158 species. Five species were noted for just the second time: Wood Duck, Common Goldeneye, Turkey Vulture, Golden-crowned Kinglet and Townsend's Warbler. A Golden-crowned Sparrow spotted at Seven Springs was another good find. The warbler was still present along the Lower Camp Creek Road on March 1.

Native sparrow numbers fell sharply from last year. White-crowned Sparrow was down 74 percent and Brewer's Sparrow dropped from 264 birds to zero. We did have two excellent sparrow years following the

Cave Creek Complex Fire but their numbers may now have stabilized.

We did manage to establish record high counts for eight species. Gambel's Quail was once again our most abundant bird but Mourning Dove came in a close second. Last year Carefree had the national high count for Gambel's Quail, Cactus Wren and Rock Wren. We gathered at The Horny Toad Restaurant for our compilation dinner.

This year our area leaders were Harvey Beatty, Diane Berney, Greg Clark, Troy Corman, Tara Deck, Cynthia Donald, Herb Fibel, Grant Loomis and Tice Supplee. Many Maricopa Audubon members participated and I am grateful for your support. –Walter Thurber (compiler)

## Rio Verde, Box Bar and Needle

Rock – March 8 -- Seventeen people signed up for the March 8th MAS field trip to Rio Verde, Box Bar and Needle Rock, along the lower Verde River. Of the fifteen who actually showed, only six were members of Maricopa Audubon, and for many this was their

first MAS field trip. The Verde was running vigorously out of Bartlett, because of winter rainfall. This limited the water dependent species tallied to Great Blue Heron, Mallard, American Coot, and desert nesting Bald Eagle.

On this first official day of spring break for some students, it was not surprising to find Needle Rock overrun with boisterous two, three, and four wheel ORVs. Additionally, it being a between seasons birding day, we were fortunate to tally a day list of 34 species. By the trip's end I was pleased to learn that everyone present, by their own admission either fairly new birders, or at least birders new to the area, told me that they had added no fewer than two new species to their life lists. The most notable birds seen were, a Bald Eagle, (delivering food to a nest with three nestlings) a Vermilion Flycatcher, a small flock of Western Bluebirds, a Lark Sparrow, a Sharp-shinned Hawk, and a species that seems to be becoming harder and harder to find these days—a Loggerhead Shrike. – Herb Fibel

# Photo Quiz Answers

Jim Burns

The scene in our quiz photo this month is one that's repeated over and over again throughout Arizona during June. It isn't frequently observed, though, because it happens shortly after most out-of-state birders have gone home and local birders are already complaining about the heat and the summer doldrums. Breeding season is a stressful time for our breeding species that have mouths to feed, and it's a stressful time for their prey species for obvious reasons. This scene depicts how real life out there in the natural world cycles and recycles. It's a scene that is always interesting though not always pretty.

You might think if you were an avian species at the top of the food chain, life would be easy, but prey still has to be found, captured and killed, and then transported home to awaiting young. And going home you might have to run a gauntlet of belligerent neighbors who figure they just might be the next prey item. Easy life? Not so much. Our photo quiz this month depicts a slice of that life.

A)—Bad photo, easy bird  
In the past when we've dealt with three species in one photo, we've kept it simple and gone from left to right. In our current photo, however, the species are lined up vertically. Instead of going from the top or bottom I'd like to go by size, largest to smallest, because the largest bird in our photo is at the top of this little food chain even though it's not the one topmost in the image. It should be the easiest to identify, if only because of its size, and identifying it first will provide good clues to the other two species seen with it.

Our largest bird, then, the one in the center of this "stack," looks like a raptor judging by its flight jizz and its size relative to the other species. It is soaring on flat wings, tail spread to its widest (and most beautiful) span, and these broad, rounded wings strongly suggest that our first quiz bird is a buteo. The obvious tail pattern seen here and the lack of any contrast on

the underparts of this soaring buteo should be enough for us to identify it.

The number of buteos seen in Arizona in June with this striking tail pattern and otherwise light and unmarked underparts is one. During breeding season adult Gray Hawks soaring overhead in southeastern Arizona are a delight to see and easy to identify. The only other raptor with three wide, dark tail bands and a narrow, light subterminal band seen in our state is Broad-winged. Broad-winged Hawk is a buteo, so its shape would be similar to our quiz raptor, but it is only a migrant through out state, rare at that, and usually seen only in fall. Broad-wings would never appear this uniformly light underneath, and both juvenile and adult Broad-wings are characterized by a dark border on the primary tips and the trailing edge of the underwing, a field mark not present on our Gray Hawk.

**//Although many small passerines are known to harass passing hawks, only one family of birds is known to be bold enough and aerially adept enough to actually ride a raptor's back and take harassment to the level of attack.//**

Among the non-buteo daytime raptors, another good tail pattern match for our bird is Hook-billed Kite, a south Texas specialty never recorded in Arizona. The other group of raptors, which might be mistaken for Gray Hawk if seen quickly overhead at a distance, is the accipiters, and indeed the Gray Hawk is known in some border areas as the "Mexican Goshawk." This local name, however, is based more on its hunting style—cutting and darting through wooded areas for its prey—than on physical resemblance, and though overhead views of our three accipiters show dark tail bands, with a good look these bands are more numerous, narrower, and less prominent than those of Gray Hawk. This adult Gray

Hawk was photographed near Kino Springs north of Nogales, Arizona in June 2007.

B)—Bad photo, difficult bird  
Our second quiz bird is the uppermost one in the photo. It is visible, wings spread, just above the head of our Gray Hawk. It is a much smaller bird than the hawk and appears to be flying along above and slightly behind it, head down, peering intently at it. As most of you are aware, our daytime raptors are often harassed by ravens and other hawks, and these aerial dogfights are thought to revolve around hunting territory and air space, but our second quiz bird is much too small to be a Common Raven or even a small falcon such as an American Kestrel.

The interaction you see here isn't about pecking order or space. It's about survival, and the bird on top of our Gray Hawk is, in fact, literally on top of our Gray Hawk, riding its back, pecking vigorously at the crown and nape of the flying raptor, using its outspread wings for balance to keep its precarious perch. Although many small passerines are known to harass passing hawks, only one family of birds is known to be bold enough and aerially adept enough to actually ride a raptor's back and take harassment to the level of attack. These are the tyrant flycatchers known as kingbirds, and the names "tyrant" and "kingbird" both originate from the aggressive nature of these birds.

Kingbirds are a species of the open country in southeastern Arizona where Gray Hawks utilize riparian corridors for nesting, and our possibilities include Western, Cassin's, Tropical, and Thick-billed. Even in this poor image, the bright white underparts of Thick-billed would stand out, and this kingbird shows no obvious contrast on its underparts, so we are left to choose among the other three. You may recall that the cover of last fall's Wren-dition featured a Cassin's Kingbird harassing a Zone-tailed Hawk. One of the best field marks for Cassin's,

distinguishing it from Western and Tropical, is its contrasting white chin set off against its gray chest which is much darker than those of the other two. Close inspection of our photo shows this contrast in the area beneath the kingbird's bill. This Cassin's Kingbird had a nest of its own in a cottonwood close to the nest tree to which the Gray Hawk was returning.

C)—Bad photo, difficult "species" . . . with the prey item in its beak.

See it now? Not a bird, though birds constitute a fair percentage of the Gray Hawk diet. Nor a lizard which is thought to be a primary diet staple. This is a small, furry mammal, and another close inspection may reveal legs and tail dangling down in front of the hawk's breast area. A larger blow-up of the image helped identify this third species as an Arizona Cotton Rat, apparently common along the margins of the golf course at Kino Springs and the surrounding desert scrub.

Cotton rats average ten inches, which makes them slightly larger than a kingbird.. There is no question that Cassin's Kingbird appears on the Gray Hawk menu, and there's no question the Cassin's Kingbird in our photo knows this very well. Get out this spring and take your birding to another level. Don't be content to "tick and run." Hang out, be patient, take your time. There is much to be observed and appreciated in the lives of birds beyond just finding and identifying them.

## Roadrunner at Rest

Judy Wade



Photo by Bill Baker

This roadrunner is snuggled in for the night at the Astronomers Inn in Benson, AZ. He's settled on top of a bakers rack that sits on a little-used patio. He was awake, but quite willing to get his photo snapped. It is not often you see a Roadrunner at rest.

**Monthly Meetings--\*November meeting is canceled\***

First Tuesday of the month, unless otherwise announced, September through April, 7:30 p.m. Our meeting place is Dorrance Hall, at the Desert Botanical Garden (DBG), except for our annual banquet in May, the location to be announced. The DBG is located at 1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona. This is approximately 1/4 mile north of the Phoenix Zoo. For a map, please see the DBG website at [www.dbg.org/](http://www.dbg.org/).

Dorrance Hall is located just off the main parking lot and entry to the DBG. There will be signs directing you to the meeting place. Please contact a board member if you have any questions, or check out our web site at [www.maricopaaudubon.org](http://www.maricopaaudubon.org). Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at Rolling Hills 19th Tee Restaurant, 1405 N. Mill Avenue, starting at 6:00 p.m.

**Membership Information**

There are two ways to become a Maricopa Audubon member and to receive the Cactus Wren\*dition by mail:

1. By joining the National Audubon Society. If you live in the Phoenix metro area generally east of 43rd Avenue, or in the East Valley other than in Gilbert or Chandler, when National Audubon Society receives your check made payable to National Audubon Society and your membership application, you will be assigned to Maricopa Audubon Society, or you can send your check payable to National Audubon Society and your National Audubon Society membership application to Jack Follett, membership chair, and he will send it on in to National Audubon for you, or
2. By becoming a "Friend of Maricopa Audubon". In this case you will become a member of Maricopa Audubon Society only, and you will not receive the Audubon magazine or any of the other "benefits" of National Audubon membership, but you will receive a one-year subscription to the Cactus Wren\*dition. "Friends" contribution categories are: Anna's Hummingbird-\$20; Verdin-\$35-\$99; LeConte's Thrasher-\$100-\$249; Cactus Wren-\$250-\$999; Harris's Hawk-\$1,000-\$9,999\* and California Condor-\$10,000+\* \*These levels include a signed, framed, photograph by Jim Burns of your designated raptor. Mail your Friends membership application and your check made payable to Maricopa Audubon to Jack Follett, membership chair. All "Friends" members receive certain designated discounts. (If you reside outside the above-indicated geographical area, the only way to receive a subscription to the Cactus Wren\*dition is to become a "Friend")

For National Audubon membership address changes or other questions call (800) 274-4201 or e-mail [CHADD@audubon.org](mailto:CHADD@audubon.org). For all other membership questions call or e-mail Jack Follett.

**Submissions**

Copy for The Cactus Wren\*dition must be received by the editor by e-mail, (may be on computer diskette, or typed and double-spaced; however, this is not preferred) by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. E-mail to: Cactus Wren\*dition Editor, Deva Burns. [devaburns@aol.com](mailto:devaburns@aol.com)

**Opinions**

The opinions expressed by authors in this newsletter do not necessarily reflect the policy of the National Audubon Society or the Maricopa Audubon Society.

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