



The Cactus Wren-dition



VOLUME LXX NO. 4

SPRING - 2025



Grey Ghost Attack
Photograph by Sean McEntee

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On the cover

Grey Ghost Attack

Sean McEntee

"This was only my second sighting of a grey ghost [male Northern Harrier], ever! I was incredibly lucky to witness this, but not as lucky as the Mourning Dove that got away. It happened extremely quickly. In real time, I barely registered the poof of feathers!"
Glendale Recharge Ponds.

Notice from the Maricopa Audubon Society Board of Directors

Vote to Change Name

1 April 2025

Members of Maricopa Audubon Society will vote on April 1st, 2025 to select a new name for the organization. Last year, the Board voted unanimously to change our name and in January, the Board sought input from our members about a new name. The most popular suggestion was "Maricopa Bird Alliance" and the Board favors that as our new name.

John James Audubon owned, purchased and sold slaves, rationalizing this by his belief in phrenology. Back in 2023, the four hundred or so Audubon chapters looked to National Audubon Society (NAS), hoping a new, unifying name would remove the association with slavery and the racism of Audubon's era. When NAS decided to retain "Audubon", MAS and other chapters began to consider name changes. About 50 NAS chapters have changed names, including Tucson Audubon Society which is now "Tucson Bird Alliance."

Times change, and we adapt. Names change as well (remember the Sparrow Hawk, Traill's Flycatcher, Water-Ouzel, Oldsquaw?) The time has come to move forward.

"Maricopa Bird Alliance" better reflects our values and in no way affects our core mission - fighting to protect the natural world through fellowship, education and advocacy. Nor will it change our relationship with NAS.

If we are to accomplish our mission to protect the natural world, we must invite and embrace all wildlife advocates.

If you're still skeptical or need more information about John James Audubon before voting, we encourage you to do an internet search - there are many articles and conversations on this topic. You can read Kenn Kaufman's 2024 book, *The Birds Audubon Missed* or Tom Gatz' book review in the Winter 2024-25 *Cactus Wren•dition*.

Respectfully,

Emily Thomas

Sierra Planck

Robin Silver

Charles Babbitt

Jelena Grbic

Loren Hupe

Henry Messing

Jeff Goulding

Robert Carter

Jason Struthers DVM

Laurie Nessel

To Vote

Attend the member meeting
1 April 2025 in person as a MAS member
in good standing.

Announcements & Volunteer Opportunities

It's Official

While the Bald Eagle has long been the unofficial mascot of the United States, President Joe Biden signed the first legislation to make it official on Christmas Eve, 2024.



Glendale Recharge Ponds Bald Eagle
Photo by Sean McEntee

Nominating Committee

The Maricopa Audubon Society's annual election of Board of Directors will take place at the April 2025 monthly meeting. Any Society member may submit nominations to the Nominating Committee. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor. All Board positions are open for nominations. Contact any Board member to learn about job descriptions. Please consider volunteering to benefit the Maricopa Audubon Society.

Brian Ison (602) 909-0541 lwrkenai@cox.net

Geri Koeppel gerikoeppel@me.com

Joe Emery (480) 838-6083

21st Annual Arizona Botany Meeting

1 - 2 March 2025

The Desert Botanical Garden

1201 N. Galvin Parkway, Phoenix, Arizona

Theme: Exploring the Botanical Diversity, Ecology, and History of Arizona's Native Flora. Info at aznps.com/events.

Saturday 29 March 2025, 4-9PM

Fountain Hills Dark Sky Festival - Volunteers Wanted

Fountain Hills Community Center

13001 N. La Montana Dr, Fountain Hills

Help raise awareness about the environmental benefits of dark skies.

Activities include nationally-known speakers, student art contest, exhibits, silent auction, star party, food vendors, and more. To volunteer at the MAS table, contact Education Chair Jason Struthers, DVM jds.dvm@gmail.com.

Bird Survey Opportunities with Arizona Game and Fish Department

Colonial (Rookery) Surveys

March - May

Marshbird Surveys April - May

Training TBA. A kayak, boat or paddle board would help cover parts of the Gila River.

Nightjar Surveys April - May

If you are comfortable working at night and know nightjar calls, this effort requires the most help.

Cuckoo Surveys May/June

Training required. Contact **Tim Flood** (602)618-1853, tjflood@att.net. Tim welcomes birders without cuckoo training to help identify other bird species in the field.

SWFL Surveys

Breeding Bird Surveys April-June

Visit <https://www.pwrc.usgs.gov/bbs/RouteMap/Map.cfm> for 15 available Arizona routes.

Contact **Ashley Lauria**

alauria@azgfd.gov 623-236-7508

Committees/Support

Associate Editor Mark Larson

Poet Laureate David Chorlton

www.maricopaaudubon.org

"In the case of livestock grazing, prudence is especially warranted but has long been in short supply. There have been warnings down through the years - from seers as well as the land itself - about the impacts of grazing in the arid West. None has been heeded."

- Debra L. Donahue,
The Western Range Revisited

AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

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

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

Support Maricopa Audubon

as part of Fry's Community Rewards Program. Register

your Fry's VIP card and select Maricopa Audubon #WW583 as your non-profit organization at no cost to you. Please visit Fry's Community Rewards online or visit your local Fry's to register.



Sign up for the e-newsletter!

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

To subscribe, email:

Maricopaaudubonaz@gmail.com

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



Join or renew your
Maricopa Audubon
membership



CONSERVATION UPDATE by Charles Babbitt

Cattle Grazing on the Coronado National Forest

MAS has joined the Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) in a lawsuit against the Coronado National Forest (Coronado) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) over their failure to protect three riparian obligate Threatened and Endangered species and their designated critical habitat: the western population of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, the Sonoran chub and the Chiricahua leopard frog.



Chiricahua leopard frog photo by Jim Rorabaugh.

ripples across the water. They are found in pools, reservoirs, streams, rivers and stock tanks. They have disappeared from over 75% of their historic sites. Birders visiting the Huachuca Mountains can often see these frogs in a pond near the entrance to Miller canyon.

We cannot control climate change, but we can control livestock impacts from grazing, trampling, erosion, and soil compaction.



Sonora chub photo courtesy USFWS.

The Coronado National Forest is home to a significant percentage of these species' total populations and the habitat designated essential to their survival and recovery. 13% of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and 18% of the Chiricahua Leopard Frogs' critical habitat is found in the Coronado. Virtually all the Sonoran Chub found in the United States occur there.

The Sonora chub was unknown to science prior to 1945. It is found almost exclusively in permanent pools in Sycamore Creek and California Gulch. The most brightly colored of the chub genus, it develops intense red on the lips, fin bases and belly during the breeding season. It was listed as threatened in 1986.

The Chiricahua leopard frog, listed as threatened in 2002, has cream-colored spots on its sides and a distinctive motor-like rattle call. Vibrations from a chorus of courting frogs' vocal sacs send



Yellow-billed Cuckoo photo by Greg Lavaty.

The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is often spotted by birders who listen for its distinctive croaking call in cottonwood-willow riparian areas. A Neotropical migrant, it doesn't arrive on breeding territories in Arizona until mid-June and leaves by mid-September. Yellow-billed Cuckoo populations declined dramatically between 1966 and 2010. The distinct western population was listed as Threatened in 2014. MAS members have been conducting Yellow-billed Cuckoo breeding surveys since 2020.

The cumulative effects of cattle grazing and climate change present the most serious threats to these three riparian obligates and their habitat. The Coronado permits cattle grazing on approximately 90% of the Forest with 177 active grazing allotments. In 2020 and 2021, the CBD surveyed 114 miles of critical habitat on the Coronado and documented 67.4 miles (59.1%) of significant and 16.3 miles (14.2%) of moderate cattle grazing impacts. In all, 73.4% of critical riparian habitat was impacted.

The USFWS biological opinion, which is being challenged in the lawsuit, determined that the current grazing scheme will not jeopardize these species or adversely modify their critical habitat. In making that determination, the biological opinion relies heavily upon the grazing permittees' compliance with forage utilization rates set by the agencies which the lawsuit contends are inadequately connected to the breeding cycle and habitat needs of the chub, frog and cuckoo, lack a causal connection to the authorized level of take, and are contrary to the best scientific evidence as to what is necessary to protect them. In other words, the current grazing scheme sanctioned by the biological opinion means business as usual with no meaningful change to the very grazing practices that have imperiled these species in the first place.



Significant Impact of Cattle Grazing

(Top left) Ungrazed cuckoo critical habitat and (below left) grazed cuckoo critical habitat. (Above right) Ungrazed Chiricahua leopard frog critical habitat breeding pond and (below right) grazed and eutrophic critical habitat breeding pond. Coronado National Forest. Photos Center for Biological Diversity.

Mount Graham Red Squirrel

A 2004 survey on Mount Graham in the Pinaleno Mountains of southeastern Arizona found a more than expected number of Mount Graham red squirrels, one of the most endangered mammals in the United States. The 89 additional squirrels bring the total population to over 200. Despite this good news, the ultimate survival of this species remains very much on a knife’s edge. MAS is in litigation to force the USFWS to redesignate critical habitat for the squirrel (see Cactus Wren-dition Summer 2024, 6-7). Most of its prime habitat has been destroyed by telescope construction, forest fires, (including intentional back burning to protect the telescopes), insect infestations and other climate change-related causes. Today, most of the squirrels are found outside of

designated critical habitat. Re-designation is seen as the only way to get this species through the current habitat bottleneck it is facing.

The Role of Climate Change in Drought

The western United States has been in a prolonged drought, considered the worst in 1,200 years, since 2000, bringing with it intense wildfires, record high temperatures, ecosystem degradation and decreased runoff into vital water resources like the Colorado River. A recent study¹ sheds new light on the effects of anthropogenic warming. Historically, drought in the west was largely driven by precipitation deficit, i.e., the lack of rain and snow. This study finds that, beginning in 2000, increased evaporative demand caused by rising surface temperatures is the

major driver of both the severity and frequency of drought in the western United States. During the particularly severe drought period between 2020-22, 61% of the drought’s severity was from evaporative demand as opposed to 39% from precipitation deficit. Evaporative demand is the amount of water the atmosphere can absorb from the planet’s surface - a measure of how thirsty the atmosphere is. Increase in evaporative demand, directly linked to higher temperatures, results in more water drawn from the land through evaporation and transpiration. The study directly links increased evaporative demand to increasing temperatures from the burning of fossil fuels. It cautions that if we don’t reduce greenhouse gases we can expect longer and more severe droughts in the future.

¹Yizhou Zhuang, Y., et al. (Nov 2024). Anthropogenic warming has ushered in an era of temperature dominated droughts in the western United States. *Science Advances*, 10 (45).

Charles Babbitt is MAS Conservation Chair.

MEETINGS by Loren Hupe

We are holding hybrid meetings, both in-person and via ZOOM. Links are posted on our website and Facebook page a few days before the meeting. MAS holds meetings (membership is not required) on the first Tuesday of the month, September through April at Papago Buttes Church of the Brethren, 2450 N. 64th Street, Scottsdale. Meetings start at 7:30 PM. Come at 7:00 PM to socialize. Pre-meeting dinners (September through April) are held at 6:00 PM at Saigon Bowl Restaurant, 8213 E. Roosevelt St., Scottsdale, AZ 85257. The May meeting is our annual banquet.

4 March 2025

David and Diane Reesor

Birds of the Dominican Republic Reesor

David's interest in photography was sparked by the Brownie Hawkeye camera he received on his tenth birthday. His parents encouraged his interest and obligingly allowed his darkroom setup in the basement of their home. In 1992, David won the "Best Canadian Amateur" photo of the year in the Canadian international underwater photo contest. In 2007 David co-authored a book "Predator – Life and Death in the African Bush" with African safari guide Mark Ross. David has immense patience to remain "in place" for long periods of time to photograph birds and animals, and capture the most breathtaking shots. And, Diane, having lived in remote villages in Dominica, Windward Islands, and Nunavut, Canada, Diane really appreciates the local people. The things she enjoys most about them is how they live their everyday lives, their most promising traditions, festivals, and ceremonies. Some of Diane's most challenging journeys are the ones she cherishes most. Her favorite treks include Nepal, the Inca Trail, The Compostela Route and Copper Canyon. When it comes to her love for photography, Diane has David to thank. After meeting David, traveling and photography have now become an integral part of their life together.



1 April 2025

Cindy Marple

Birding Down Under: The Birds of Australia

Long separated from other continents, Australia is home to a unique variety of plants, animals and birds. Almost half of the 842 bird species are endemic. We'll look at bird life in two different regions of the country: the "Wet Tropics" of the Northeast region, and the much drier Southeast. Some species, such as Kookaburra and Rainbow Lorikeets, are widespread, and are familiar to us. We'll see those, along with many other unique families and species from each region.

Cindy Marple is a Nature Photographer whose favorite subject is birds. Her interest in birds and birding has grown as she spends time observing and learning more about her subjects. She has done photo tours in many regions of the world in pursuit of birds, wildlife and other nature subjects. She teaches an Intermediate Birding class through the City of Chandler Recreation department, and speaks to local camera clubs and Audubon societies.

We will hold elections for the Board of Directors and vote on a name change (see p.2).



6 May 2025

69th Annual MAS Banquet

Liberty Wildlife, 2600 E Elwood Street, Phoenix, AZ 85040

6:00PM BYOB Social Hour, Raffle and Silent Auction. Bring cash to tip bartender.

7:00PM Buffet Dinner (vegan options)



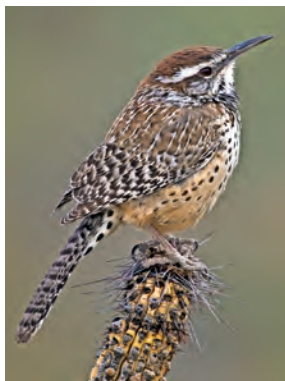
Cost \$30.00 per person. Reservations required. Email lhupe@asu.edu or voicemail 602.391.4303. **Deadline to register is April 15.** No shows will be billed. You may pay at the door (cash, credit card or check), online (Events - Annual MAS Banquet Reservations) or mail checks payable to "Maricopa Audubon Society" with "Banquet" in the memo line to Henry Messing, Treasurer, 4360 E St. John Road, Phoenix, Arizona 85032. Our agenda will include induction of our new Board of Directors.

Guest Speaker: Dr. Stephanie Lamb

Avian Wildlife Rehabilitation

Birds get themselves in trouble out in the wild all the time. Learn about the common problems seen in wild avian treatment and what it takes to care for these amazing species.

Dr. Stephanie Lamb graduated from UNLV with a B.S. in Biology and attended veterinary school at the University of Minnesota. Upon completion, she performed a one year internship in avian and exotic medicine followed by a two-year residency in avian medicine and surgery. She has practiced at exotics-exclusive animal hospitals and has also worked with many humane societies, parrot and rabbit rescue groups, wildlife centers and raptor rehabilitation facilities. Dr. Lamb passed her Avian Medicine boards in the fall of 2014 and recertified in 2024 with the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners in Avian Medicine.



FIELD TRIPS by Robert Carter

- Wear neutral colors, sturdy walking or hiking shoes, sun protection, and hat.
- Bring binoculars, sunglasses and water.
- MAS encourages carpooling. Please cover your driver's gas at the recommended rate of 10¢ per mile per rider. Please wear masks at drivers discretion.
- The American Birding Association has adopted principles of birding ethics. Check them online or ask your field trip leader.
- For Tonto National Forest Day Use Passes, visit USDA Tonto Pass.



Scan for current field trip info.

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

NORTH PHOENIX PARKS TOUR

Wednesday, March 26

We'll observe the various habitats of four Phoenix parks - Deer Valley, Buffalo Ridge, Roadrunner, and Sweetwater, while contemplating the importance of these critical stopover points for migratory birds. This may be a good chance to see some early warblers, and other migrants working their way to their breeding grounds up north, all while helping gather data that fuels conservation science.

Time: TBA (check website)

Limit: 20

Difficulty: 1-2 (walking on mostly flat terrain)

Leader: Torin Waters

NEW RIVER NATURE RESERVE

Saturday, April 12

Nestled against I-17 lies this hidden gem - a confluence of riparian, mesquite bosque, and Sonoran Desert. New River is always full of surprises - especially early in migration. We'll walk north flanked by the above-ground portion of New River on our left and desert scrub and saguaro covered hillsides to our right, offering opportunities to see a number of species in a limited area. In the mesquite bosque we'll look for warblers and gnatcatchers. Bring snacks, water, sun protection, and sturdy hiking shoes. Meet at Metrocenter.

Time: 6:00AM - 10:30AM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 2.5 (walking on uneven, at times rocky terrain)

Accessibility: no restrooms

Leader: Robert Carter

GILBERT RIPARIAN PRESERVE

April Date TBA

Just in time for spring migration to get going, we'll stroll around the ponds of the East Valley's favorite birding spot. We'll

note the different habitats and check for any reported rarities, and perhaps even find some of our own. We'll enjoy the diversity of bird species, as well as the plant and insect life!

Time: Meet 6:30AM

Limit: 20

Difficulty: 1 (walking on mostly flat paths)

Accessibility: restrooms, benches, water fountains

Leaders: Robert Carter and Sean McEntee

MONTEZUMA WELL

Friday, April 25

Join Jackie Anderson and Robert Carter



Photo by Taylor Schoonover

for a joint Sonoran/Maricopa Audubon outing to Montezuma Well, a limestone sinkhole replenished with 1.5 million gallons of spring water daily. With a canopy of sycamore, cottonwood and willow, and the cool spring flow, temperatures can be as much as 20° cooler than on the rim. With migration in full swing the possibilities are endless. Bring a picnic lunch, chair, and hiking shoes. Meet at the McDonalds, NE of I-17 and Carefree Hwy to carpool. Site is 70 miles north of Phoenix off Exit 293.

Time: Meet 8:30AM

Limit: 20

Difficulty: 2 (1.5 mile walk, unpaved path)

Leaders: Jackie Anderson and Robert Carter

SUNFLOWER, SYCAMORE CREEK AND MT. ORD

Friday, May 1

Come along on a trip exploring three distinct, yet closely related habitats between Sunflower, Sycamore Creek, and Mt Ord. All three offer great chances to see birds we often miss in the Valley, like Bridled Titmouse, Zone-tailed and Common Black Hawks, Hairy Woodpecker, Bushtit and more! Come for the birds, stay for the adventure, as we make our way up 7,128' Mt Ord. Bring water, lunch, sun protection, and sturdy walking shoes.

Time: Meet at Sunflower at 7:30AM

Limit: 8

Difficulty: 2 (some walking on slight incline, birding by car, high elevation)

Accessibility: bring any desired mobility aids - no public restroom

Leader: Charles Babbitt

STEWART MOUNTAIN DESERT TORTOISE QUEST

Saturday, May 24



Hardy souls willing to traverse steep, rocky slopes in the heat with a chance of finding a desert tortoise can join in a search for these keystone species. Bring

Continued on p. 17



Hovering Osprey. Photo by Pierre Deviche.

It was just 48°F 19 November 2024 when we started birding at sunrise. We saw **House Finch**, **Mourning Doves** and a flock of **Red-winged Blackbirds** fly by. Then an **Osprey** flew in, circled Riverview Lake, hovered and stooped, coming up fishless. Our trip leader, Torin Waters, called out a distant raptor that resolved into a **Bald Eagle** that flew over and perched in the tallest tree in the neighborhood south of us.

Around the park we saw **Anna’s Hummingbird** and **Eurasian Collared-Doves**. Karen Stucke and I recalled the first time we saw these doves, about 20 years ago at the Salt River, and debated their identity. The speed of their colonization has been nothing short of remarkable. Originally from India, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, 50 Eurasian Collared Doves were released in 1974 by a breeder in the Bahamas. They made their way to Florida in the '80's, and were first reported in AZ (Eagar) in March 2000. By the end of the year they were reported in six AZ counties. According to Doug Jenness¹ these doves follow a pattern described by ornithologists as “jump” dispersal, where there is initial longdistance dispersal of individuals with the gaps gradually filled

It’s easy to dismiss [Eurasian Collared Doves] as non-native invaders but Kenn Kaufman suggests otherwise, that we try to enjoy them, and “part of enjoying them,” says Jenness, “is learning about them—their habits, breeding and distribution patterns, and relationships to other birds.”

in. It’s easy to dismiss these doves as non-native invaders but Kenn Kaufman suggests otherwise, that we can try to enjoy them, and “part of enjoying them,” says Jenness, “is learning about them—their habits, breeding and distribution patterns, and relationships to other birds.”

Back at the lake we saw **Brewers Blackbirds** and a male **Great-tailed Grackle** chase a brown **Mallard** into the water and harass a **Rock Pigeon** and other birds. Torin noted that domesticated Mallards are bulkier than wild ones and have a number of plumage variations. He said this brown Mallard displayed partial albinism, a sex-linked trait almost exclusively seen in female birds, as was this Mallard with an orange bill. Torin sent us a link to a fascinating article on color aberrations by Hein van Grouw² which was reviewed by Matt van Wallene and illustrated with local examples³.



Female Mallard with partial albinism. Photo by Torin Waters.

We took the tunnel (it’s graffiti now painted over) under AZ 202, and emerged on the Rio Salado Pathway that overlooks a riparian section of the Salt River to the north and the Mesa Recharge Basins to the south. The adjacent Northwest Water Reclamation Plant sends water to both sites which in turn feed one of two SRP water-banks, the Granite Reef Underground Storage Project. The river channel also gets runoff from the freeways. The channel is lush, but a long stretch of young willows had died. There were mature cottonwoods and lots of scrub tamarisk. On the river we saw and heard **Northern House Wren** (split in 2024 into 7 species), and a small flock of **Black Phoebes** flying continuously between several trees. An **Osprey** followed the channel, snagged about 15” of leafy



Wilson’s Snipe. Photo by Tom Cheknis.

cottonwood twig, crossed the flooded gravel pit only to discard the twig at the far

end. Green leaves that contain aromatic compounds (monoterpenes and isoprene) are thought to kill or repel avian ectoparasites.⁴ So why discard it?

Continued on p. 17

Field Trip Report **Rim Lake(s)** by Kathe Anderson

14 August 2025 was a picture-perfect day on the Mogollon Rim - a special treat to escape the unrelenting heat of the Sonoran Desert. Too bad not many birds showed up! Still, we made the most of it and enjoyed every breath of cooler, cleaner air.

Our first stop was Hunter Creek, a gated development south of Christopher Creek. Most folks are very friendly in this upscale “cabin” community, and often stop to chat about the birds – especially the **Great Blue Heron** rookery. The rookery had served its purpose by mid-August, but a lingering heron offered a fleeting view. The usual Violet-green Swallows and Purple Martins were too high to confirm, but a home with eight nectar feeders was teeming with **Broad-tailed Hummingbirds**, with a couple of **Black-chinned** and **Rufous** mixed in. **Chipping Sparrows** and **Dark-eyed Juncos** caught our attention on the ground, while noisy **Acorn Woodpeckers** and **Steller’s Jays** made us look up. An apparent family group of four **Black-headed Grosbeaks**



American Crows. Photo by Pierre Deviche.



Juvenile Bald Eagle. Photo by Laurie Nessel

was the most grosbeaks I’ve ever seen so close together.

Willow Springs Lake was the only Rim lake we visited, hoping to avoid the long road construction delays on Route 260. Nope. The road to the lake was being repaved so we crept along until being waved to pass. At the lake, we were hardly out of the car before **Ospreys** called and wheeled above us, seven in all! They make high-pitched, almost squeaky, calls totally unbecoming an impressive raptor. A **Bald Eagle** watched the Ospreys imperiously, never moving from its exposed perch the whole time we spent at the lake. It was a juvenile – probably one of three that biologists were watching in June when I was there last.

Other than those feathered fishers, it was almost eerily quiet in the woods along the lake. A couple of foraging **Western Tanagers** and a group of eight **American Crows** stayed near us for a while.. A foursome of **Yellow Warblers**, busy picking insects off shrubbery at eyelevel, was our last sighting there.

We certainly can’t boast a long list or any exotic species but the shade and scent of ponderosa pines, frantic little squirrels scurrying everywhere (one with a mouthful of nesting material), azure sky dotted with puffy clouds, and refreshing air made the trip absolutely worthwhile. Plus, folks donated \$50 to CEDO, the binational conservation, research and education organization that Maricopa Audubon Society has supported for years. Seems like a win-win to me!

Kathe Anderson led a group of three birders on the fast-paced 18 November 2024 “mini Big Day” field trip to four locations: Top-of-the-World, Oak Flat, Boyce Thompson Arboretum (BTA), and Gilbert Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch (GWR). At our first stop at Top-of-the-World, we saw 12 species, including flocks of **Western Bluebirds**, **White-Crowned Sparrows**, and **Dark-eyed Juncos**.

Kathe noted that she doesn’t often see **Acorn Woodpeckers** here, but we spied three, along with a **Northern Flicker** and **Gila Woodpecker**. Joel Mathias was delighted to see a lifer, the **Sage Thrasher**, and we got a great view of a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**.

The next stop at Oak Flat yielded 15 species, including a trio of **Towhees: Abert’s, Spotted, and Canyon**, as Kathe exclaimed, “It’s a three-Towhee day!” We also peered at a **Bridled Titmouse** difficult to see in the canopy and



saw a **Woodhouse’s Scrub-Jay** glide to a treetop perch.

Highlights at BTA included a juvenile **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** flitting in a bush. Kathe confirmed it once we saw the splotches of pink as it emerged sporadically from the branches. Later, Sue Moreland spotted a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, and we watched it diligently drill into an olive tree trunk for some time. Its distinctive black-and-white speckled plumage and red forehead were visible at first, and once it flashed

its yellow breast, Kathe called it. We counted 24 species at BTA, including **Bewick’s, Canyon and Rock wrens**, a **Hermit Thrush**, 20 **Phainopepla**, and 7 **Northern Cardinals**.

Our final stop was at GWR where we remarkably got a decent view of a **Wilson’s Snipe**. It was a waterfowl bonanza, as we checked off a **Northern Pintail**, 3 **American White Pelicans**, 25 **Neotropic Cormorants**, 3 **Double-Crested Cormorants** (including one standing near



Wilson’s Snipe with prey. Photo by Jim Burns

a **Neotropic** so we could observe the contrast), 3 **Great Blue Herons**, and much more for a total of 51.

Toward the end, Sue said, “I can’t believe we haven’t seen a **Green Heron**,” but she must have manifested it because she spied one at the water’s edge a few minutes later. Kathe pointed out a lovely view of a sun-bathed **Hermit Thrush**, our second of the day. We were lucky to get good views of usually difficult birds, a few less-expected birds, and such a bounty in one day - 75 total species.



Sage Thrasher (above), Ruby-crowned Kinglet (left), and American White Pelican (below). Photos by Pierre Deviche.

Geri Koepfel is a beginning birder and freelance journalist in Ahwatukee.

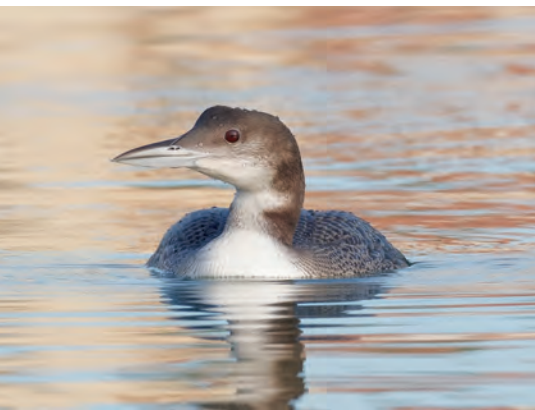


Field Trip Report Lake Pleasant

By Charles Babbitt

Lake Pleasant is a great place to look for rare and interesting waterbirds (ducks, loons, grebes, gulls and geese) during the winter months. Birding there, however, can also be difficult. Waterbirds can sometimes be hard to find, constantly moving around in search of food, diving out of sight for prolonged periods of time and difficult to spot in the white caps and wave troughs encountered on the lake's frequent windy days.

Ten enthusiastic MAS birders spent a chilly morning at the lake on 10 December. As we traveled to 10 Lane Boat Ramp just after sunrise we could see the lake was completely covered with white caps, the result of a passing storm front. Three **Ospreys** were observed hovering nearby and a flock of eight **Ring-billed Gulls** sped by, aided by a stiff tailwind. As we were leaving the area, a **Common Loon** was spotted swimming and diving in a small, sheltered cove. We were able to get exceptional close-up views of this rare winter visitor.



Common Loon. Photo by Pierre Deviche.

As we drove along Sunset Ridge Road, we spotted two flocks of **Common Goldeneyes** numbering about forty birds. Among them was the continuing male **Barrow's Goldeneye**. The group got good looks at this beautiful duck which stood out among the Common Goldeneyes, showing distinct white spots or bars on the

coverts and a unique crescent-shaped spot on its face. This northern breeder has been returning with the Common Goldeneyes to the same area for at least five years, first being spotted in 2019.

From Two Cow Cove Road we were able to see, identify and study all three North American **merganser** species: **Common**, **Red-breasted** and **Hooded**. Two female Red-breasted Mergansers were spotted



Common Merganser pair photo by Jim Burns.



Female Red-breasted Merganser. Photo by Tom Cheknis.

among a group of female Common Mergansers. Always an identification challenge, we were able to study the subtle differences in throat contrast, head plumage and bill thickness of these two species. The Hooded Merganser was observed floating along a nearby shoreline. It was a female, much smaller than the other two species, with its crest flared. In the same area some of our group were able to get a brief look at a female **Greater Scaup** before it dove and disappeared behind a small island.

Of the grebe species, our group found both **Pied-billed** and a single **Western Grebe**. We missed Horned Grebe which can often be found in that area. Lake Pleasant is a great location to look for grebes in the winter. Six of the seven North American Grebe species have been found on the lake including; Western, Clark's, Pied-billed, Eared, Horned and very rarely Red-necked.

Some of the land birds spotted along the way included **American Kestrel**, **Spotted Sandpiper**, **Rock Wren**, **American Pipit**, **White-crowned Sparrow** and **Black-throated Sparrow**. In spite of the cold and windy conditions we ended up with an impressive 32 species for our morning's effort.

Charles Babbitt is MAS Conservation Chair.



(Clockwise from top left) male Common Goldeneye, male Barrow's Goldeneye, and female Common Goldeneye. Photo by Pierre Deviche.

Midwestern University's Audubon on Campus Chapter Receives FORBIRDS Grant

By Jason Struthers, DVM



In December 2024, in partnership with the City of Glendale Community Center, the student chapter of Audubon on Campus (AoC) at Midwestern University (MWU) received a \$10,000 Audubon in Action grant to create bird habitat and provide education to community residents.

The FORBIRDS grant proposes to:

- 1) install and survey Lucy's Warblers (*Leiothlypis luciae*) nest boxes on the MWU campus and in the Glendale community;
- 2) create a bird habitat with native plants on the University campus and in the Glendale community;
- 3) organize a fall Glendale community event to educate residents on urban threats to birds (bird-window collisions, outdoor cats, etc.) and offer solutions; and include the Sonoran Audubon Society, US Fish and Wildlife Service, ASU's Deer Valley Petroglyph Preserve, and local wildlife rehabilitation facilities;
- 4) expose Glendale summer camp youth to birds and birding, culminating with a birding excursion to the Hassayampa River Preserve.

full support from the MWU administration, and the campus landscapers, with generous donations from Native Resources International and ASU Associate Professor Dr. Thomas M. Cahill. The chapter rallied 16 students and faculty to enhance the campus' existing Sonoran Desert habitat with 35 new plants to benefit urban wildlife, insects, and the campus community.



A view of the fresh plantings at the bird habitat on the Midwestern University Glendale campus. Photo by Jason Struthers.



The BLM authorized AoC to harvest pups from this mother *A. murpheyi*, located near Lake Pleasant, AZ for conservation and propagation. Photo by Dr. Thomas M. Cahill.

erriophylla). The two *Agave murpheyi*, donated by Dr. Cahill, are particularly significant. *A. murpheyi* was cultivated by

The mission of the MWU chapter of Audubon on Campus is to inspire and empower students to advocate for the environment, protect biodiversity, and support sustainable practices through birdwatching, habitat restoration, and educational events both on campus and in the community.

In January 2025, the chapter began fulfilling its grant mandate with



A Lucy's Warbler, cradled after suffering a window collision on site, was successfully released after 30 minutes rest in a safe place. Photo by Jason Struthers.

Noteworthy additions include saguaros (*Carnegiea gigantea*), fishhook barrel cacti (*Ferocactus wislizeni*), hedgehog cacti (*Echinocereus engelmannii*), two *Agave murpheyi*, two species of milkweed (*Asclepsia albicans* and *A. subulata*), jojoba (*Simmondsia chinensis*), blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*), desert lavender (*Condea emoryi*), prickly pear (*Opuntia spp.*), cholla (*Cylindropuntia spp.*), wolfberry (*Lycium andersonii*), creosote (*Larrea tridentata*), desert globe mallow (*Sphaeralcea ambigua*), triangle bursage (*Ambrosia deltoidea*), banana yucca (*Yucca baccata*), Joshua tree (*Yucca brevifolia*), chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), and fairy duster (*Calliandra*

the Hohokam in the southwestern U.S. for hundreds of years. It was an important, sustainable source of food, beverage, fiber, clothing, sandals, nets, blankets, medicines, soaps, musical instruments... indeed there are 70 documented uses for this native plant according to Wendy Hodgson, Herbarium Curator Emerita and Senior Research Botanist at Desert Botanical Garden. Today, this relict survives in only a few ancient Hohokam sites. We intend to serve as a refugium for this imperiled species and hope to distribute its pups to interested tribes and botanical gardens to help re-establish populations in the wild.

Continued on p. 17



Anna Heveran: Youth Scholarship Recipient

Anna Heveran was a recipient of the Youth Scholarship, supported by funds raised from the Herb Fibel Big Sit!, to the Arizona Field Ornithologists/Western Bird Banding Association joint annual meeting last September. Here is her essay describing her experience.

This weekend was such a blast! First off, I'd like to thank Maricopa and Prescott Audubon Societies for sponsoring me with the AZFO Youth Scholarship. Thank you to Mr. Doug Jenness for urging me to apply for the scholarship. Thank you to Ms. Chrissy Kondrat, Ms. Danielle Kaschube, and all of the speakers, field trip leaders, and organizers who made this experience happen. You all dedicated your time and effort into a great weekend for everyone.

The first day was a nice, laid-back introduction to what the weekend would hold. I enjoyed our trip to Mt Lemmon, where we learned about the different ecosystems and the species at each habitat and elevation. We had amazing looks at several Townsend's Warblers and Brown Creepers that I especially liked. Our guide, Mr. Troy Corman, was excellent and very knowledgeable. After the trip, I was really interested in Ms. Kaschube's talk about plumage, aging, and molting. She was a skilled speaker, and I liked learning about how to categorize each bird that is banded using the correct terminology.

Saturday was a fun day meeting people and listening to their presentations. I especially liked the ones about Burrowing Owls, the dry tropical forest of Mexico, the Motus tags, and hummingbird hybrids. Among all the people I met, Dr. Alfredo Sandoval and some of the local eBird reviewers made an impression on me. They were so knowledgeable. All of the food was excellent as well. I had a lot of fun with the bird ID game, the raffles, book sale, and silent auction. The keynote presentation offered an interesting view of what the military does for conservation.

Sunday morning was exciting for me. We were going to the Santa Cruz River, which I've never been to before! I loved learning about the riparian habitat and how important it is to conserve and study this area. Our guide, Mr. Bill Lisowsky, knew where to look for each species and kept us all engaged. It was so beautiful with the cottonwoods, the river, and the numerous birds, including warblers and hummingbirds.

Again, I'm so thankful that I had the opportunity to attend the AZFO/WBBA joint annual meeting. I learned a lot about a variety of subjects and made connections with birders across Arizona and beyond. I look forward to attending again in the future.



A Note from Membership Chair Jeff Goulding

Let me introduce myself. I am Jeff Goulding, the newly appointed Membership Chair.

I'm originally from Montana where past Field Trip Chair Larry Langstaff and I went

to the same High School although in different years. I live in the Hudson River Valley, New York with plans of moving to Arizona full time but for now I'm snow birding from late Dec-June.

I was a career newspaper photographer until I got downsized after nearly 30 years of being on the job. I then transitioned to teaching photography at Marist College (now Marist University), for 10 years. I have taken my skills from newspapers and the varied assignments to photographing birds. Great fun! I was

president of my local bird club, the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club in Orange County, NY for two terms (4 years). The name comes from the 19th century ornithologist and naturalist, and US Army physician who wrote *Mammals of the Mexican Boundary of the United States* in 1907. The quail is named after him.

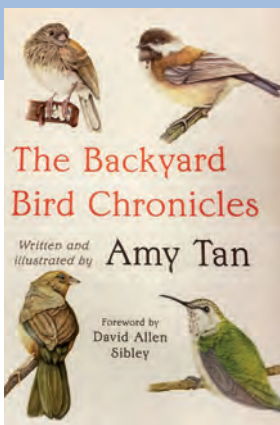
I'm working on organizing our membership data and incorporating more website options to be more efficient and better serve our members. Over a year ago, in order to eliminate confusion on membership dues, we consolidated everyone's due date to April 1. After some consideration, we recently changed it to December 31. This should be easy to remember - new year, renew MAS dues. You will have one month, until January 31, to submit payment. We will continue to prorate your dues. Please send any comments or concerns to jeffryg04@gmail.com.

Good birding!!!!
Jeff Goulding



Maricopa Audubon Society
is on Facebook.

The Backyard Bird Chronicles



Written and illustrated by Amy Tan
With a forward by David Allen Sibley
2024, Softcover, 288 pages, \$35.00 plus tax

Book Review by Henry Messing

I have a confession to make. Until recently, I have not read a book by Amy Tan though I liked the film adaptation of her book *The Joy Luck Club*. It was with a little

trepidation that I decided to read her new book, *The Backyard Bird Chronicles*. I mean backyard birds? The book summarizes nine personal journals of observations from her Sausalito, California yard. It is filled with abundant drawings culled from a dozen sketchbooks as well as paintings that are truly exquisite. Tan's childhood love of drawing was crushed by an instructor's comment ("You're unimaginative."). During COVID she sought peace in a world rife with conflict and a country divided by hatred and misinformation. She took nature journaling workshops with John Muir Laws and her love of drawing was rekindled. Bird watching for Tan is much more than identifying different species. To her it fulfills a deep and instinctive urge to plug into the "rhythms of what is happening around us. It makes us part of something larger and gives us a sense of our place on earth."

The pages consists of daily narratives of her observations at her feeders. And there are many feeders - suet, seed, nectar, live meal worms and water features. In fact, at one time she was ordering 10,000 mealworms a week! She journals about the

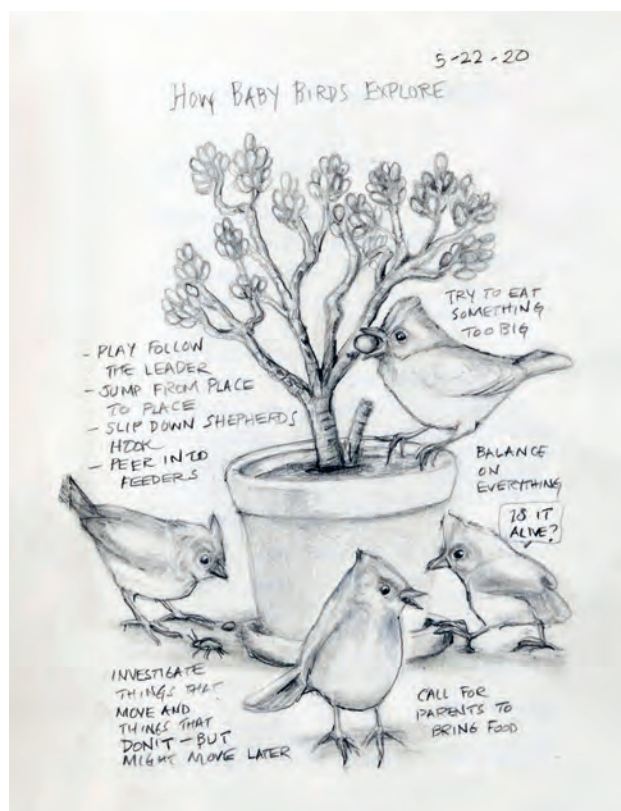


Bewick's Wren

interactions between the various species, about adults tending their young, and certain species-specific behaviors.

In one entry she wonders why feeder birds like finches discard so many seeds. The short answer from Bernd Heinrich is that songbirds prefer shorter, fatter, unshelled sunflower seeds, "more depth than length", because they contain more oil. In another entry she muses about whether movement in the belly of a Hermit Thrush was caused by the many live meal worms it had just devoured. Once a drain pipe from a cistern

"[Birdwatching]... makes us part of something larger and gives us a sense of our place on earth."
- Amy Tan



created a small waterfall. Tan observes towhees jumping onto the water-slide and speculates that the birds are having "fun." The wonder and joy of her observations, unhindered by scientific objectivism, is evident in each report. She peppers her book with witticisms that bring further joy to the reader. This comment made during COVID resonated with me, "Thanks to the birds, I have never felt cooped up, staying at home. So much remains new, so much can be discovered. As restricted as we are by the specter of a deadly disease, when watching birds, I feel free."

Tan's narrative is clear, concise, and incisive. From the first page she had me sucked in! I also enjoyed the accompanying sketches and notes though at times her hand writing could have been clearer. Tan not only has a mind for writing but an eye for capturing the essence and beauty of her backyard bird community. *The Backyard Bird Chronicles* is a fun and insightful read. Enjoy!

Henry Messing is a retired biologist and current MAS treasurer.

Be A Life Line: Liberty Wildlife Hotline Volunteers Make a Difference

By Susan Bainbridge

Knowing what to do when encountering wild animals in distress isn't always clear. Liberty Wildlife's hotline volunteers provide vital support, advising callers on how to handle wildlife and get them the care they urgently need. Here are five common wildlife emergencies and how to respond with the help of hotline volunteers if needed:

Birds and Windows

Birds mistake window reflections for open space, crashing full-speed into them. They may become stunned, injured, or killed. If you find a stunned bird, let it rest in a quiet, warm, safe place for 30 minutes to an hour. Often, a little rest is all the bird needs to recover. If you notice injuries or an inability to fly, seek professional help. Hotline volunteers advise callers on how to transfer the bird to a ventilated box lined with a soft cloth. Raptors and other large birds may need to be picked up by a rescue volunteer to be treated and hopefully released back to the wild.

Entanglements

Wildlife can easily become trapped in many unfortunate ways: glue traps, fishing lines, even soccer nets, leading to severe injuries or death if not addressed quickly. If you find entangled wildlife, first assess the condition of the animal. If it is not badly injured, you can gently free it, being careful not to cause further harm. Once freed, look for cuts, puncture wounds, or signs of trauma to determine whether transport to a rehabilitation center is necessary. Hotline volunteers offer both emotional support and practical advice to callers throughout this stressful process, ensuring the animal receives the care it needs.

Pet Attacks

Pets - particularly outdoor cats - pose a significant threat to wildlife, often causing severe injuries to birds, reptiles, and small mammals. Even minor cat bites or scratches can lead to infections. Quick action can prevent infections and increase the chances of survival. Hotline volunteers provide expert advice on how to carefully handle the animal to minimize stress, and transport it to a rehabilitation center for proper diagnosis and treatment.

Pets - particularly outdoor cats - pose a significant threat to wildlife, often causing severe injuries to birds, reptiles, and small mammals.

Baby Wildlife: Not Always Orphans

Liberty Wildlife is seeing a growing number of baby animals year-round due to climate change and development. People commonly find baby animals that appear to be abandoned. However, many young are temporarily left alone by their mothers while they forage or attend to other needs. Check for a nearby nest - sometimes nestlings can be safely returned to their rightful place. If you find a fledgling, rabbit, or squirrel that appears to be orphaned, monitor it for several hours. If the mother doesn't return or the animal seems to be in distress, contact the hotline. Volunteers offer guidance on handling these situations, ensuring the animal gets proper care.



Liberty Wildlife

HOTLINE VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



Photos by ReaglePhotography

REQUIREMENTS:

Smartphone, reliable internet service, 2-3 hours of your time, covering a scheduled shift once a week.

TRAINING:

No experience necessary. Training is virtual. Various times available.

Help Arizona's Wildlife from the comfort of your home

To learn more about Liberty Wildlife or to register, please visit the link below or scan the QR code.

We look forward to welcoming you to this extraordinary learning opportunity.



Scan to Apply Now

<https://libertywildlife.org/support/volunteer/volunteer-application/>

Infections and Disease: A Hidden Threat

Infections and diseases are common in wildlife, often resulting from injuries, bites, or environmental exposure. Symptoms can include lethargy, discharge, labored breathing, or unusual behavior. Wildlife rehabilitation centers have protocols, such as wearing gloves, to limit exposure and prevent the spread of disease. Trained volunteers help callers identify symptoms and, if needed, arrange for safe transport to a rehabilitation center.

The Hotline Volunteer: A Lifeline for Wildlife

Liberty Wildlife hotline volunteers are passionate voices guiding callers through stressful situations, offering emotional support while saving wildlife in need.

Every call is a chance to help heal the creatures that are struggling to survive in a world full of danger. You can be trained and work from the comfort of your home. The satisfaction of being a part of an animal's rehabilitation and ultimately its return to the wild is unmatched. If you're passionate about wildlife and want to make a difference, consider becoming a Liberty Wildlife hotline volunteer.

Susan Bainbridge is an avian enthusiast with over a decade of experience in veterinary animal welfare. She currently serves as a coordinator at Liberty Wildlife with a strong passion for volunteering.

Natural Bird Feeders

By Michael J. Plagens

If you love birds there is a good chance you have, or have had, a plastic, wood, or metal and glass contraption meant to dispense seeds for the wild birds in your neighborhood. Birds from near and far arrive for a nutritious banquet of thin-

begin plucking at the developing seeds. Next, a few White-crowned Sparrows joined them. Spiderlings are fast-growing perennials/annuals of summer and autumn. The numerous stems are very slender and sticky and form tangles

offending seed. After 15 minutes the finches had their fill of these pesky seeds and flew off. It's easy to imagine a stuck seed being dislodged somewhere else. The bird takes some seeds as food while serving the plant's vital dispersal needs.



A male House Finch surveys a patch of scarlet spiderling for ripe fruit.

hulled, easy-to-eat seeds. Magically, these artificial feeders get refilled on a regular basis. Even birds gravitate to an easy life.

For millions of years, birds have been finding food without such innovations or generosity from bird lovers. If you allow nature to rule your yard to a greater degree, many of the natural foods that birds need will thrive and serve as *Natural Bird Feeders*.

The greatest diversity of bird foods will be associated with native trees, shrubs and flowers. Traditional yards of Bermuda grass draw in mostly exotic doves and starlings. And, desert landscaping with gravel covering the soil and meticulously cleaned of fallen leaves and weeds is often devoid of habitat and foods for most native birds.

Birds finding their natural foods offers opportunities for many interesting observations. This morning, I watched some House Finches alight in a patch of scarlet spiderling *Boerhavia coccinea* and

reminiscent of a spider's web. The tiny flowers would be discreet were it not for their brilliant magenta color. Fastidious gardeners consider them weeds and remove them at once.

The seed pods of spiderlings are a little larger than a rice grain and are covered in gland-tipped hairs that are also very sticky. When the finches reached for one, they often ended up with another one stuck on the outside of their bill. Clearly annoyed, they immediately feak* off the

The White-crowns seem more easily discouraged and leave after hardly a bite. Another reason these seed eaters don't fill up is that many weed seeds, including spiderlings, contain toxic phytochemicals. The birds are programmed to eat just a few of one kind before switching to another, thereby avoiding getting poisoned.

*From the German "feegen" meaning sweep.

Michael J. Plagens joined Audubon soon after taking ornithology in 1978 under Stephen Russell at UofA. He continues to study all facets of natural history in Arizona, Florida and Kenya. His first interest is entomology (PhD@UofFLA), and the layered relationships between all the species in our ecosystems. Visit his guide to Arizona's flora and fauna at arizonensis.org.



A cluster of three spiderling fruits covered in glue droplets that will adhere to socks, beaks, or in this case a pen tip.

Feathers in Time

Poem and Photo by David Chorlton

Brother desert, sister sky, the Roadrunner
tail high, makes his every step
a bright surprise
and answers questions on existence
with a sunlit turn
from watching to
a mid-air grab. A mesquite bends
to let him pass, his shadow catches on a thorn
and he remains half-moment, half
a memory. He's a medicine bird,
leaves tracks that point
in all directions so evil cannot follow,
and warms his spirit self
with sunshine early
in the day. Debate until the lizards fly
what life means to the living
and he'll wait
for an answer to snatch
just to carry it away. What matters to him is being
here then not. And when
he's gone he's still
present as the light
sleeping.



David Chorlton's yard-roadrunner thermoregulating.

Field Trips continued from p. 7

snacks, sun protection, hat, sturdy hiking shoes and stick, a flashlight or mirror, snake gaters if you have them, and plenty of water. Details emailed shortly before the trip.

Time: 5:00 - 11:00AM

Limit: 8

Difficulty: 4 (steep, rocky terrain in heat)

Leader: Laurie Nessel

Riverview Park Continued from p. 8

A stately Fremont Cottonwood had several **Orange-crowned Warblers**, **Ladder-backed Woodpecker**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Red-naped Sapsucker**, seen just long enough to identify. We also saw **American Kestrel**, **Gadwall**, **Pied-billed Grebe**, **American Wigeon**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, **Northern Roughwinged Swallow**, **Vermilion Flycatcher**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Western Grebe**, and heard the "typewriter" rattling of a **Marsh Wren**.

We scanned the basins, mostly dry, sparse, stubby growth, and saw **Rock Wren**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Western Meadowlark** and **American Pipit** through Torin's scope. Water entering the west basin attracted a **Greater Yellowlegs**, **Least Sandpiper**, **Killdeer** and **Wilson's Snipe**, camouflaged until it took flight and circled us. We noted how a **North-ern Harrier** hunts skimming the ground, and uses its disc-like facial feathering, similar to an owl's, to direct sound to its ears. We tallied 42 species at Rio Salado Pathway and 24 species at Riverview Park. Torin also saw **Black-crowned Night Heron**, **Belted Kingfisher** and **Common Raven** while scouting. The park's walkways and bike path make the entire trip wheelchair accessible, but there is an incline at the tunnel. This site is an excellent spot for in-town birding with a buddy.

- ¹ Jenness, D. (2004. Sept.). Eurasian Collared-Doves in Arizona. *Vermilion Flycatcher*. Reprinted *Journal of Arizona Field Ornithologists*.
- ² van Grouw, H. (2021). What's in a name? Nomenclature for colour aberrations in birds reviewed. *Bulletin of the British Ornithologists' Club*, 141 (3), 276-299.
- ³ van Wallene, M. (2022-23, Winter). A Review of Nomenclature for Avian Color Aberrations by Hein van Grouw. *Cactus Wren-dition*. 19-20. (also hollandwest.com/a-review-ofnomenclature).
- ⁴ Wimberger, P.H. (1984). The Use of Green Plant Material in Bird Nests to Avoid Ectoparasites. *The Auk*, 101(3), 615-618.

FORBIRDS Grant continued from p. 12

Since the habitat was inaugurated on Earth Day 2023, we've documented a rock squirrel burrow (*Otospermophilus variegatus*), kangaroo rat (*Dipodomys sp.*), Anna's Hummingbirds (*Calypte anna*), Rock Wrens (*Salpinctes obsoletus*), Cooper's Hawk (*Astur cooperii*), summering Lucy's Warblers, and wintering Lesser Goldfinches (*Spinus psaltria*), Yellow-rumped Warblers (*Setophaga coronata*), White-crowned Sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*), and others.

We have so much more to accomplish in 2025 and hope to share future developments as dedicated students and faculty tend this urban space for animals, insects, and flora.

For more information, contact Dominique Wenzler-Steves, Veterinary student and MWU AoC representative, dominique.wenzlerstev@midwestern.edu; and faculty advisors Dr. Jason Struthers, jstrut@midwestern.edu and Dr. Alexandra Goe, agoe@midwestern.edu



Round-Tailed Ground Squirrels They hibernate and estivate but come May the young of these semi-social species emerge to rough-house, play and feed. Desert Botanical Garden.



Rock Wren
Exhibiting mobbing behavior responding to the pishing of fellow birder Robert Carter.



Desert Spiny Lizard
A common sight at the Desert Botanical Garden in spring and summer. This male is displaying his brilliant throat while posturing in defense of his territory.

Nature Through the Artist's Eye: **Sean McEntee**

Sean McEntee has been a photographer for 24 years, starting in the Air Force, where he was a graphic designer and still photographer. He discovered a passion for hummingbirds, raptors, and gradually other wildlife during COVID at the Desert Botanical Garden. He met Michael Searcy, a fixture there for over 15 years and Cactus Wren-dition contributor. Searcy



Branch Management Discussion
This Great Egret did not tolerate sharing its hunting perch at this Phoenix Zoo pond with a Neotropic Cormorant.



Great Egret With Lizard

Great Egrets occasionally stop by the Desert Botanical Garden to catch sluggish, basking tiger whiptail lizards that have emerged from hibernation. This egret didn't miss once, it ate three tiger whiptails in 15 minutes!

taught McEntee about the desert ecosystem and the importance of curiosity. McEntee's hat is a tribute to Searcy who passed away last August. McEntee loves talking about birds and other wildlife so if you see a man with a long lens and distinctive hat, stop and say "hi".

Follow Sean on Instagram @s.mcentee.



Christmas Coyotes

Coyotes tussle over a shoe on 25 December 2024. Gilbert Riparian Preserve.



Maricopa Audubon Society

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MONTHLY MEETING

Please see meeting information on page 6 or maricopaaudubon.org. For questions or speaker suggestions, contact a Board member.

TWO WAYS TO JOIN AND RECEIVE THE CACTUS WREN•DITION

1. National Audubon Society - For dual membership in NAS and MAS call (844) 428-3826 and ask to be assigned to MAS chapter B00. You will get The Cactus Wren•dition as a courtesy. To be guaranteed a subscription, please consider joining MAS as a Friend.

2. Maricopa Audubon Society Friend dues go directly to MAS and support our mission. Friends are guaranteed a print subscription to The Cactus Wren•dition, and discounts on books and merchandise. Dues are \$10/year student/youth, \$20/ year individual. MAS is a non-profit 501(c)(3). All dues above \$20 are tax deductible.



You can join at a monthly meeting; online at maricopaaudubon.org/join; or send your name, address, phone or email, and a check payable to Maricopa Audubon Society to MAS, POB 65401, Phoenix, AZ 85082-5401. All Friends memberships now renew annually each year on December 31. Subscriptions are pro-rated.

SUBMISSIONS

Copy for The Cactus Wren•dition must be received by January 15, April 1, July 1, and October 1. Articles not received by the deadlines may not appear in the upcoming issue. Some issues feature a theme. Feel free to enquire and take the theme into account. Editor: Laurie Nessel laurienessel@gmail.com

OPINIONS

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

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