



The Cactus Wren·dition



VOLUME LXX NO. 3

WINTER - 2024



From Egg to Sky:
My Adventures in
Condor Propagation
by Brendan Burns
pp. 16 - 19

Contents

- 2 Programs
- 3 Announcements
- 4 Field Trips
- 6 Oak Flat Trip Report
by Paul Heveran
- 8 Mingus Mountain Trip Report
by Kathe Anderson
- 10 Pasture to Paradise: How a
Friendship and a Love of Birds
Restored a Forest
by Jason Struthers, DVM
- 13 Christmas Bird Count Schedule
- 14 The Birds Audubon Missed
Book Review by Tom Gatz
- 16 From Egg to Sky: My Adventures
in Condor Propagation
by Brendan Burns
- 20 Loggerhead Shrike
Poem by David Chorlton
- 22 Nature through the Artist's Eye
Matt Wilson

On the cover

Juvenile California Condor at
Vermilion Cliffs, AZ
Photo by Matt van Wallene

MEETINGS...

We are conducting 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.

December 3, 2024

Robert Mesta

Native Americans, Feathers, and Bird Conservation

American Indians have always held a unique bond with animals, which has profoundly influenced their belief systems, worship, and cultural practices. The use of animal parts, particularly feathers, is integral to their traditions. However, 20th-century laws and societal changes threatened this connection, leading to declines in both Native cultures and bird populations. Robert Mesta will discuss this important issue and how Liberty Wildlife is working to provide Native Americans legal access to feathers while conserving bird species for future generations.



Robert Mesta, is a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFS) ornithologist with extensive experience protecting endangered birds. He led the reintroduction of captive-bred California Condors to the wild in 1992 and contributed to the recovery of the Bald Eagle, down-listing it from endangered to threatened in 1995. Currently, he oversees the Liberty Wildlife Non-Eagle Feather Repository Program, partnering with the USFS to distribute non-eagle feathers to Native Americans for ceremonial use.

January 7, 2025

Dr. Jan F. Kamler

Leopards and Tigers and Jaguars, Oh My! Research and Conservation on Large and Small Cats in the Tropics

Dr. Kamler will summarize his conservation work on cats and other carnivores that he carried out in Southeast Asia as well as his current work in Brazil which also includes training bird guides and using bird ecotourism to empower women and local communities.



Originally from Kansas, Kamler obtained a PhD in Wildlife Science from Texas Tech University. He was a Fulbright Scholar in Europe, and a Marie Curie Fellow at Oxford University where he's been based for the past 20 years.

February 4, 2025 TBA

March 4, 2025

David and Diane Reesor

Birds of the Dominican Republic

David became interested in photography ever since he received his Brownie Hawkeye camera on his tenth birthday. His parents encouraged him and he setup a darkroom in their basement. In 1992, David won the "Best Canadian Amateur" photo-of-the-year in the Canadian International Underwater Photography Contest. In 2007 David co-authored *Predator – Life and Death in the African Bush* with safari guide Mark



Continued on p. 21

Announcements & Volunteer Opportunities

Swainson's Hawk by Muriel Nerdtmeyer



19th Annual Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Count Saturday, 18 January 2025

Held on the third Saturday in January, we will count the number of raptors wintering in this farmland between Phoenix and Tucson. The accumulated data assesses trends which can influence future plans that could impact the habitat and raptors there. For information, search AZFO Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Survey. To participate, contact dougjenness@gmail.com.

November 1 - April 28

Project FeederWatch

For over 30 years, people have submitted data on birds at their feeders for two consecutive days from November through April on a flexible schedule. The data help scientists understand long-term trends in bird distribution and abundance, the timing and extent of winter finch irruptions, disease vector distribution, and more. For details, visit FeederWatch.org.

14 December 2024- 4 January 2025

Christmas Bird Counts

All skill levels needed! See page 21 for schedule.

January & February

Volunteers Needed! Thrasher Tagging

Solar PPT tag deployment on Bendire's and LeContes Thrashers in Arizona and Nevada. Tracking their range will help establish territories to preserve between solar arrays on primarily BLM land. Contact Chrissy Kondrat ckondrat@azgfd.gov.

Wednesday 12 February 2025; 8:30AM - 2:00PM

Environmental Day at the Capitol

Wesley Bolin Memorial Plaza, 1700 W Washington St.

A coalition headed by the Sierra Club meets for the annual lobby day at the Arizona Capitol. Meet with your legislators, hear great speakers, and connect with environmental advocates. RSVP sandy.bahr@sierraclub.org (602) 999-5790.

Saturday 18 January 2025

18th Annual Phoenix Urban Waterbird Count

Always the third Saturday of January. Up to 70k waterbirds of 60 species have been documented in this otherwise desert urban area. Your help is needed! Contribute to citizen science, meet like-minded individuals, expand your knowledge of species. Contact Ashley Lauria alauria@azgfd.gov.

14-17 February 2025

25th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

Data submitted on birds in your backyard or elsewhere provides a snapshot of bird

Continued on p. 21

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:

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

Geri Koepfel gerikoepfel@me.com

Joe Emery (480) 838-6083

Committees/Support

Associate Editor Mark Larson
Poet Laureate David Chorlton

www.maricopaaudubon.org

"What happens to nationalism, to political boundaries, when allegiance lies with winds and waters that know no boundaries, that cannot be bought or sold?"

- *Braiding Sweetgrass,*
Robin Wall Kimmerer

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:

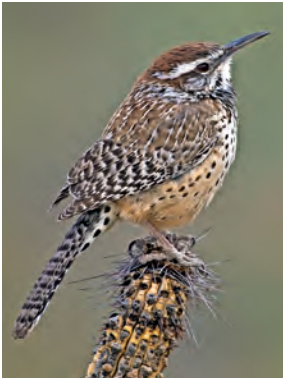
Maricopaaudubonaz@gmail.com

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



Join or renew your
Maricopa Audubon
membership





FIELD TRIPS by Robert Carter

- Participation in field trips risks exposure to infectious diseases. If you have any symptoms of illness or have been exposed to COVID-19, stay home.
- For Tonto National Forest Day Use Passes, visit USDA Tonto Pass.
- MAS encourages carpooling. Please cover your driver's gas at the recommended rate of 10¢ per mile per rider.
- The ABA has adopted principles of birding ethics. Check them online or ask your field trip leader.
- Wear neutral colors and sturdy walking shoes.
- Bring binoculars, sunscreen, sunglasses, hat, and water.

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



Registration on Ticketleap required unless otherwise noted. Search Ticketleap online under Maricopa Audubon; or find links to the field trip you wish to attend on the MAS website. If you're concerned about online privacy or your computer skills, you may also register by contacting 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 robert.carter@hey.com

A Message from the Field Trips Committee: Building Community, Conservation and Birding Skills

As we exit 2024, and reflect back on the fall, it has been such a pleasure to meet so many smiling faces and see some familiar ones. Moving forward, we'd like to grow the field trips program, and are reaching out to other conservation and community minded organizations around the valley to bring awareness of birds and their habitats to as many folks as possible.

The theme for the field trips this coming year is "building". We will host a series of bird walks focused on building our birding skills together, which will hopefully allow us to build a robust network of trip leaders, which will hopefully beget a robust community of birders and conservationists.

LAKE PLEASANT

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

We will spend most of the morning scanning the lake from various locations looking for water birds (ducks, grebes, loons and gulls). Bring a scope if you have one, snacks or early lunch. We will meet at the main entrance to the regional park (41835 N Castle Springs Road) at 8 am. There is an entrance fee of \$7 per car.

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 1

Leader: Charles Babbitt



TRES RIOS

Wednesday, January 1

Start your year list off with a bang at Tres Rios. We'll walk along the south side of the overbank wetlands looking for waterfowl at dawn, make our way between the marsh and desert scrub, and then to the end of the flow regulated wetlands, checking the mesquite bosque and cottonwood/willow riparian habitats. Meet at the parking area on 91st Ave. More instructions upon registration. Bring: water, snacks, sun protection, walking shoes.

Limit: 15

Difficulty: 3 (distance, unpaved.)

Leader: Robert Carter

TEMPE MARSH SUNSET BIRDING

Sunday, January 5

East of Tempe Town Lake is Tempe Marsh, a productive habitat throughout the year. Winter is especially good for observing waterfowl species. If you're intrigued by the concept of weird* duck season, this may just be the outing for you. We might even see some weird non-duck waterfowl, like grebes, coots, herons, and egrets. Osprey frequent the area, as do Bald Eagles, and many a vagrant have been documented as well. We will be birding from a stationery platform along the multi-use path that runs south of the marsh. Spotting scope and binoculars will be available. Meet at the northside of the Tempe Marketplace, just NE of Yogi's Grill. Bring water, snacks, folding chair. Restrooms at Tempe Marketplace.

Time: 4:00-6:00PM

Limit: 20

Difficulty: 1 (stationary birding on paved surface.)

Leader: Robert Carter

*a nod to comic Rosemary Mosco.

BUCKEYE/ARLINGTON

Saturday January 11

Please see info online

Leader: Kathe Anderson

PHOENIX MOUNTAINS PRESERVE PIESTEWA NATURE TRAIL

Thursday, January 16

Come along for an early morning stroll around the Piestewa Nature Trail at the foot of Piestewa Peak. This shrub-steppe habitat boasts the iconic Saguaro Cactus – home to many cavity nesters through



the work of Gila Woodpeckers and Gilded Flickers. Also ocotillo, a winter favorite of Costa's Hummingbirds, mesquites frequented by Phainopepla - "The Goth Cardinal", and cholla fields full of Cactus Wrens and Blackthroated Sparrows. After-hike option for mindful birding and conversation in a ramada. Bring water, snacks, sun protection, sturdy shoes, hiking poles. Meet at the 304 trailhead parking lot. Public restrooms, seating near trailhead.

Time: 8:00AM - 10:00AM

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 2 (rocky trails, elevation change)

Leader Robert Carter

FIELD WORKSHOP RIO SALADO: BETTER BIRDING BASICS I: SIZE AND SHAPE

Saturday, January 25

This outing is for birders of all skill levels with an interest in improving their bird ID skills. We will focus on size and shape, as a furtive glance is often all we have to go on. Size and shape can determine many



species, even in poor light. Binoculars available. Bring: portable seat (for 10-20 minute stops), water, snacks. Meet at the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center (restrooms).

Time: 8:00AM - 10:00AM

Difficulty: 1.5 (some location changes along dirt and gravel paths.)

Leader Robert Carter

SONOITA & PARKER CANYON LAKE

Wednesday - Thursday, February 5 & 6

Take a break from Phoenix with this trip to Sonoita and Parker Canyon Lake - two different habitats, both showcasing speciose southeastern Arizona's rich diversity. Spend two days birding with the backdrops of the Santa Rita and Huachuca Mountains. You'll definitely want to bring snacks for this one! See website for details.

Leader: Kathe Anderson

FIELD WORKSHOP ENCANTO PARK: BETTER BIRDING BASICS II: COLOR AND PATTERN

Saturday, February 22

This outing is for birders of all skill levels, with an interest in improving their bird ID skills. We will focus on color and pattern, building on our size and shape skills from the previous Better Birding Basics outing. This will be slow birding where we stop at different points for 10-20 minutes to observe birds, discuss our observations and work through IDs as a group. Binoculars available. Meet at the Enchanted Island parking lot off Encanto Blvd. Bring water, snacks, sun protection. Public restrooms, ample seating.

Time: 7:00AM - 9:30AM

Limit: 20

Difficulty: 1

Leader Robert Carter

HASSAYAMPA RIVER PRESERVE

Friday, March 28

Check out spring migration shifting into gear at Hassayampa River Preserve, one of many conservation success stories within Maricopa County. Comprising about 770 acres of riparian habitat along the Hassayampa River, you're always in for a treat walking the trails. If the distinction as the most reliable place in the state to see Redshouldered Hawks isn't enough for you, Hassayampa also regularly hosts rare and uncommon birds



alongside familiar Sonoran specialties. Hassayampa also hosts a number of mammal and reptile species and has a robust nature center with hands-on educational materials. Benches along trails.

Time: TBA

Limit: 10

Difficulty: 2 (uneven ground and elevation changes.)

Leader: Kathe Anderson



Birders arrived at Oak Flat Campground bright and early on August 9th to beat the heat on this scenic hike at 4,000' elevation east of Superior. Right from the parking lot, we glimpsed several colorful **Western Tanagers** and **Black-headed Grosbeak** flying east, most likely coming in to rest and feed after migrating through the night. We continued up the trail, where a gorgeous male **Bullock's Oriole** paused on a low tree. Many participants saw their lifer **Crissal Thrasher** and marveled at its long, decurved bill. Once we reached the plateau above the campground, more birds appeared as the early sun shone on the low scrub. A pair of **Gray Vireos**, life birds for several birders, foraged close to the trail. A **Zone-tailed Hawk** was flying low amongst the stirring **Turkey Vultures**.

When we reached a cluster of Emory oaks, more species made themselves known by sight and sound. **Woodhouse's Scrub-Jays** were certainly in the sound department. A nondescript **Warbling Vireo** captivated the whole group as it struggled to consume a large green insect. We headed back to the campground, seeing lots of migrants overhead. **Phainopeplas** and **Northern Mockingbirds** both flashed white wing patches, while a **Cassin's** and **Western Kingbird** flew one after the other for a neat species comparison (the Western Kingbirds breast is paler than Cassin's.) **Lark Sparrows** bounced by and settled briefly for us to enjoy their bold face pattern.

Back in the campground, resident and migrant species mixed together nicely. Two **Western Flycatchers** gave their emphatic "psu-weet!" calls back and forth from the shadows. A **Bridled Titmouse** was harder than usual to locate. We walked west to the impoundment which was dry. In the willows nearby we encountered different species, most notably migrant **Willow**



Turkey Vulture
Photo by Torin Waters



Looking east from Oak Flat Campground.
Photo by Laurie Nessel



Willow Flycatcher. Photo by Torin Waters

Flycatchers. Everyone enjoyed fabulous scope views of a singing **Spotted Towhee's** frosted back and striking red eyes.

Back at the parking lot, **Turkey Vultures** kettled nearby. Hummingbirds were too quick to identify, except a **Black-chinned** female that paused long enough for us to study. Everyone was thankful for the excellent views of many birds at this special location. We ID'd 45 species, including **Brown-crested Flycatcher**, **Bell's Vireo**, **Juniper Titmouse**, **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher**, **Bewick's Wren**, **Chipping Sparrow**, **Black-throated Gray Warbler**, and **Lazuli Bunting**. We discussed how the Resolution Copper mine would destroy this biologically rich area, sacred to the San Carlos

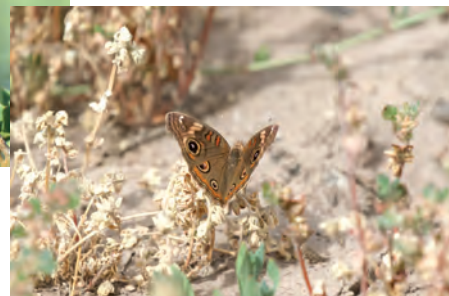
Apaches. Hopefully, future generations will continue to be able to experience this ecological treasure and value the birds, plants and other creatures that call Oak Flat home.

Paul Heveran was a long-time volunteer at Hawk Mountain, PA and co-wrote several papers on Broadwinged Hawks and irruptive passerines. He lives in Pinal County and has conducted morning flight migration counts for two fall seasons in this underbirded area. Black and Vaux's swifts were notable species recorded during these counts. Very few state records exist for Black Swift, presumably due to the altitude of their flight.

Torin Waters, a pediatric oncologist, also leads many field trips for MAS, with an emphasis on family walks that welcome the next generation of birders.



Red Saddlebags
Photo by Laurie Nessel



Common Buckeye in the dry retention basin.
Photo by Torin Waters



Warbling Vireo
Photo by Torin Waters



Paul Heveran leads the group towards the willows by the dry basin.
Photo by Laurie Nessel

Oak Flat Land Exchange Update

- March 2021 - The Forest Service withdrew the Final Environmental Impact Statement that would have triggered the land transfer. The presidential election results could determine if a new, more robust FEIS is released.
- The San Carlos Apache Tribe is asking the US Supreme Court to rescind a decision by the Arizona Supreme Court that determined Resolution Copper's discharge, which would be contaminated with copper and other toxic wastes, into Queen Creek is an existing source which would fall under the defunct Magma Mine permit. A new source determination requires the most stringent Clean Water Act regulations.
- A large, nation-wide coalition spearheaded by Apache Stronghold led by Apache elder Dr. Wendsler Nosie Sr. has asked the US Supreme Court to prevent the transfer of Oak Flat to Resolution Copper after the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in September that the land transfer is not subject to federal laws protecting religious freedom. Apache Stronghold argues that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act protects their right to worship at this sacred site.

The US Supreme Court has yet to decide whether to hear either case.

“The Arizona Supreme Court twisted itself in knots to pretend Resolution’s mostly unbuilt mining operations somehow already exists.”

- Terry Rambler, San Carlos Apache Tribal Chairman

Field Trip Report **Mingus Mountain** by Kathe Anderson

The French paraglider was the “bird-of-the-day” for our September 23rd field trip up Mingus Mountain southwest of Jerome. He set up and launched right in front of us, at 7,800’, into the cloudless blue sky, joining a soaring Red-tailed Hawk. The paraglider made it look effortless; we were awestruck and jealous. As he gained elevation over our heads, he looked as at home in the sky as the hawk.



Orange-crowned Warbler
Photo by Marceline VandeWater

While the French paraglider was definitely the biggest flyer-of-the-day, the smaller birds also caught our attention. In two spots, we were treated to active mixed-flocks reflecting the transition of Arizona’s summer and winter species. At the end of Mingus Lake opposite the parking lot, we caught movement in some trees that were glowing yellow with autumn color. Incoming **Orange-crowned Warblers** and **Yellow-rumped Warblers** joined a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** in frenetic feeding. The top of the mountain, the vista area, unveiled the same species, with southbound **Townsend’s** and **Wilson’s Warblers** mixed in.



Wilson's Warbler
Photo by Marceline VandeWater



Merriam's Turkey
Photo by Pierre Deviche



White-breasted Nuthatch
Photo by Pierre Deviche



Mountain Chickadee
Photo by Pierre Deviche

Surprises included a flock of about a dozen **Merriam's Turkeys** strolling through the wildlife management area opposite the Playground Group Campground. They were brought to our attention by campers there.

Informed locals also alerted us to the **Bald Eagle** perched imperiously in a tree above Mingus Lake. We saw it as we were moving towards the car - but it may have been there the entire time we were at the lake. The local birders also confirmed that the flurry of activity we'd seen at the opposite end of the lake was not unusual. That spot is a bird magnet.

White-breasted Nuthatches, Western Bluebirds, Mountain Chickadees, a Hermit Thrush and a couple of **Scrub** and **Steller's Jays** and **Acorn** and **Hairy woodpeckers** rounded out a spectacularly beautiful morning on the mountain.

Kathe Anderson is a longtime MAS member. She leads popular birding trips almost weekly and teaches birding workshops through ASU Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and Desert Botanical Garden. To get on her eNews list, contact kathe.coot@cox.net.



Hairy Woodpecker
Photo by Marceline VandeWater



Woodhouse's Scrub Jay
Photo by Tom Mangelsdorf



Bald Eagle
Photo by Misty Briggs



Female White-crested Coquette visiting a lion's tail or rabo de leon *Stachytarpheta jamaicensis*. The male has a spiked crest and long green feathers that extend back from his neck.
Photo by Orlando Vargas

From Pasture to Paradise: How a Friendship and a Love of Birds Restored a Forest

by Jason Struthers, DVM

While visiting a 4-hectare Costa Rican pasture comprised of minimal forest, roaming cattle, invasive grasses, and scarce biodiversity, Dr. Steve Humphrey and Orlando Vargas encountered a fortuitous omen, the rarely glimpsed White-crested Coquette *Lophornis adorabilis*.

The scarred landscape was bordered by preserves - Parque

Nacional Chirripó and Las Nubes Biological Reserve to the north and east, across the Rio Peñas Blancas, and under the shadow of the 12,000' Talamanca Mountains; and Corredor Biológico Alexander Skutch* to the west and south. Motivated by a 2.8" long, 2.7 gram hummingbird, Steve and Orlando resolved to convert the pasture to forest, to restore connectivity and biodiversity. Thus began a 20-year journey, despite advice to the contrary that warned of wasted effort and money.

In September 2004, the first trees, 20 *Inga* spp. (*Inga skutchii*, *Inga exalata*, *Inga marginata*, *Inga sapintoides*, etc.) were planted to fix soil nitrogen and cast shade to subdue invasive grasses. Subsequently, 75 species of native trees, bushes, and flowering plants like cecropia, 10 species in the Moraceae ficus family, 15 species in the Lauraceae family (food for trogons), 10 species in the Fabaceae family, *Quercus* spp., and others were planted to restore forest composition, recreate vegetation structure (i.e., canopy layers), stabilize soil, reinforce stream banks, and offer natural resources to support returning fauna. The trees grew, the understory proliferated, and the wildlife returned. Steve and Orlando monitored the avian diversity and made ecological adjustments to benefit specialized species. To support populations of White-tipped Sicklebill *Eutoxeres aquila*, centropogon and heliconia were planted throughout the property. To benefit cavity nesting toucans, potoo, and woodpeckers the friends girdled mature mayo blanco trees *Vochysia*



Steve, Orlando, and dog Beau, monitor the reforestation progress.
Photo by Orlando Vargas

gautemalensis, resulting in the breeding success of Yellow-throated Toucan *Ramphastos ambiguus*, Common Potoo *Nyctibius griseus*, and Fiery-billed Aracari *Pteroglossus frantzii*, and offered snags to support insectivores. Additional evidence of avian nesting followed, including Lesson's Motmot *Momotus lessonii* burrows.

Twenty years and more than 17,000 plants later, a miraculous transformation has occurred. Visitors can bird the property and hike the 10 miles of trails with opportunities to see some rarities like Fasciated Tiger-Heron *Tigrisoma fasciatum*



GPS map of the location (home icon) relative to the Rio Peñas Blancas and the Parque Nacional Chirripó, Costa Rica. The orange line is highway 2 or the Pan-American highway.
Photo by Jason Struthers



Common Potoo adult and fledgling.
Photo by Orlando Vargas



A pair of Fiery-billed Aracari prepares their cavity nest.
Photo by Orlando Vargas



Juvenile *Atelopus varius* on the banks of the Rio Peñas Blancas.
Photo by Jason Struthers

and Sunbittern *Eurypyga helias* creeping along rushing streams, over 27 species of hummingbirds zipping between flowers, and the endemic Costa Rican Brushfinch *Arremon costaricensis* scratching in the leaf litter.

Steve and Orlando's forest restoration benefits both resident and migratory birds. Although thousands of miles from the United States, their Costa Rican project safeguards species that appear in our backyards like Wilson's Warblers *Cardellina pusilla*, Western Tanagers *Piranga ludoviciana*, and Summer Tanagers *Piranga rubra*. The survival of migratory birds depends on forest conservation and restoration in the non-breeding range regardless of how pristine the summer range. The area not only teems with birds but also elusive mammals including ocelot, puma, and collared peccary. It is also refuge to the critically endangered *Atelopus varius*, a small Costa Rican neotropical harlequin toad.

Steve and Orlando accomplished something amazing. What began



Lesson's Motmot burrow.
Photo by Jason Struthers



Male Summer Tanager in November.
Photo by Orlando Vargas

Continued on p. 12



BEFORE (left) 2004: Pasture grass dominates with minimal forest cover. In the background is Parque Nacional Chirripó and Las Nubes Biological Reserve.

AFTER (right) 2022: Eighteen years later the forest replaced pasture and now melds inconspicuously with Parque Nacional Chirripó and Las Nubes Biological Reserve. Mission Complete!

Photos by Orlando Vargas



The altruistic actions taken by these ordinary people embolden all of us to protect and restore bird habitat, and they remind us that the individual can make a difference.

with a friendship and a shared desire to give back to the forest and to birds inspired a community to join their efforts and coexist with the forest. Annual pilgrimages of student volunteers from Washington University, often led by author and ornithologist Dr. John M. Marzluff, planted trees. Gerardo, a loyal and dedicated worker, was responsible for much of the planting and maintenance and he continues to play a pivotal role today.

Expanding from the original 4 hectares, the total reforestation spans 40-hectares and is contiguous across multiple private properties. The altruistic actions taken by these ordinary people embolden all of us to protect and restore bird habitat, and they remind us that the individual can make a difference.

*Alexander Skutch was a naturalist and prolific and fascinating writer who conserved and described native Costa Rican flora and fauna. -Editor

Orlando Vargas in 2024 holds the inspirational White-crested Coquette in his right hand, and a photo of his friends and partners, Steve and Susie Humphrey in his left hand. Photo by Jason Struthers, DVM

In memory of Steve and Susie Humphrey who died in 2023 and 2017, respectively.

Jason Struthers, DVM is MAS Education Chair. He joined Midwestern University's College of Veterinary Medicine in Glendale in 2016 as associate professor. He also mentors the Audubon on Campus chapter, provides diagnostic pathology services to clients statewide, and continues his scholarly pursuits.



Salt-Verde Christmas Bird Count
Photo by Laurie Nessel

ARIZONA CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS

Beginners welcome!

You are invited to participate in the Arizona Christmas Bird Counts. Your observations add valuable data that helps to monitor the health of Arizona's avian population. The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers throughout the Western Hemisphere go afield between December 14 and January 5 to record every individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle on that day. Participants are typically assigned to teams based on bird ID skills, level of endurance, and need. Useful guides for all birders are the Arizona Field Ornithologists CBC workshop video and eBird tips, both easily found through online searches.

Date	Day	Count Name	Compiler	Phone	Email*
12/14/24	Sa	Nogales	Bill Lisowsky	520-987-0187	ykswosil at gmail.com
12/14/24	Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Kendall Kroesen	520-971-2385	kendallkroesen at gmail.com
12/14/24	Sa	Avra Valley	George Montgomery	520-609-0245	gmontgomery at desertmuseum.org
12/14/24	Sa	Safford	Diane Drobka	928-298-0004	sunnylaz at yahoo.com
12/14/24	Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Nancy Meister	928-782-3552	yaspresident at yahoo.com
12/14/24	Sa	Flagstaff	Elaine Lockey	303-960-7319	elainelockey at gmail.com
12/15/24	Su	Ramsey Canyon	Steven Tracey	408-966-3860	stracey53 at yahoo.com
12/15/24	Su	Phoenix-Metro	Kathy Balman	678-457-0802	nerdyforbirdies at gmail.com
12/15/24	Su	Grand Canyon	Brian Gatlin	928-638-7723	brian_gatlin at nps.gov
12/15/24	Su	Jerome	Rob Gibbs	240-780-1318	robgibbs54 at gmail.com
12/16/24	Mo	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-925-5567	duerksen at msn.com
12/16/24	Mo	Salt-Verde	Marceline VandeWater	602-689-4356	marceline at ermaroni.net
12/17/24	Tu	Tucson Valley	Luke Safford	520-576-6044	lsafford at tucsonaudubon.org
			Donito Burgess	512-496-5888	dburgess at tucsonaudubon.org
12/18/24	We	Prescott	Sandy Klinikowski	928-910-1443	Macasisi823 at gmail.com
12/19/24	Th	Patagonia	Donna Edmonds	719-369-9704	dymonds2015 at gmail.com
12/19/24	Th	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta	Matthew Wilcox		matthew_wilcox at fws.gov
12/19/24	Th	Bill Williams River NWR	Joey Saccomanno	928-667-4144x128	joseph.saccomanno at fws.gov
12/20/24	Fr	Lukeville	Samantha Gillette	521 387-6849	samantha_gillette at nps.gov
12/20/24	Fr	Havasu NWR	Marge Penton	928-201-0619	malgaep at gmail.com
12/21/24	Sa	Organ Pipe Cactus NM	Samantha Gillette	520 387-6849	samantha_gillette at nps.gov
12/21/24	Sa	Saint David	Heather Swanson	520-307-4405	SPRNCABird at hotmail.com
12/21/24	Sa	Hassayampa River	Eric Hough	928-684-2772	eric.hough at maricopa.gov
12/22/24	Su	Atascosa Highlands	Jake Mohlmann	610-390-2424	mohlmann2 at yahoo.com
12/22/24	Su	Camp Verde	Kay Hawklee	432-703-0007	khawklee at gmail.com
12/23/24	Mo	Tres Rios	Robert Carter	850-339-6419	robert.carter at hey.com
12/27/24	Fr	Superior	Joy Bell	480-760-1393	joyabell_az at yahoo.com
12/28/24	Sa	Portal	Bonnie Bowen	520-558-0038	Bonnie.Bowen at gmail.com
12/30/24	Mo	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	David Griffin	575-640-0029	griffinbio at gmail.com
12/30/24	Mo	Carefree	Jen Bruening	480-239-2917	jen at mcdowellsonoran.org
01/02/25	Th	Lake Pleasant	Eric Hough	928-684-2772	eric.hough at maricopa.gov
01/02/25	Th	Payson	David Hallock	928-474-9475	eldoradh at rmi.net
01/02/25	Th	Sedona	Richard Armstrong	928-282-3675	richarmstrong47 at gmail.com
01/03/25	Fr	Appleton-Whittell	Suzanne Wilcox	520-455-5522	swilcox at audubon.org
01/04/25	Sa	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	dougenness at gmail.com
01/04/25	Sa	Timber Mesa	Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481	rhilbe739 at gmail.com
01/04/25	Sa	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-240-3737	bonnie.swarbrick at gmail.com

* for privacy reasons, you need to manually replace "at" with @ in the email addresses.

For updates and links to the count guides, visit the MAS website - Events - Christmas Bird Count

*Late addition -

12/20/24	Fr	Gila River	Bradford Milbrandt	480-993-8935	bmilbrandt at azgfd.gov
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John James Audubon - Frontiersman or Flimflam Man?

Book Review by Tom Gatz

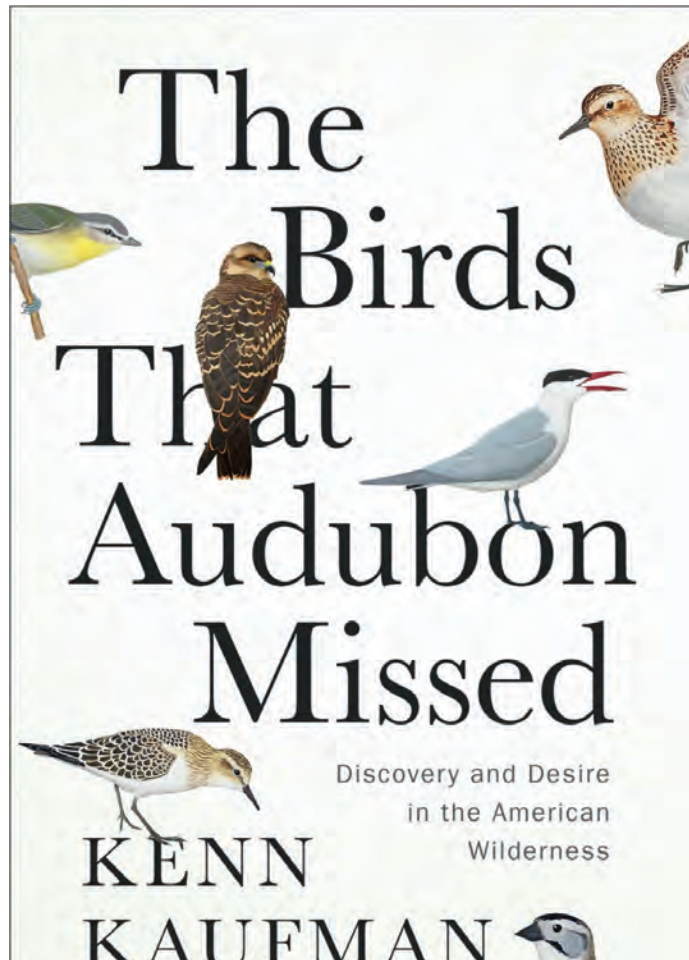
THE BIRDS THAT AUDUBON MISSED: Discovery and Desire in the American Wilderness

By Kenn Kaufman

Avid Reader Press, 2024, 387 pp. \$32.50

Kenn seamlessly weaves his own journey from his boyhood obsession with birds from age six to his challenges in illustrating this book, in Audubon's style, using the same paint, paper and postures - to the extent possible - with ten of the species that Audubon missed.

He was both; but only a little of the former and a lot of the latter. This book is much more than an interesting account of all the bird species that Audubon might have "discovered" in the sense, as Kaufman points out, that they were described by Western scholars for the first time. Of course, many of these species were already well known by the indigenous people of North America but missed or overlooked by early ornithologists. In this pageturner, author, bird artist, and one of my personal heroes, Kenn Kaufman takes us on a fascinating, fact-checking journey through the golden (and highly competitive) age of bird discovery in North America during the 1700s and 1800s. In the final chapter, he reminds us that new species are still being described to this day. It seemed like the era of finding new species in North America was about over by the late 1800s, Kenn points out that since 1957, not counting range extensions from Mexico and vagrants from Siberia and Europe, ornithologists have added 37 new species (such as Clark's Grebe, Juniper Titmouse, Woodhouse's Jay, and Canyon Towhee) using new technology including DNA, voice analysis and advanced field studies.



The "Washington Sea-Eagle" that never was. Apparently, Audubon just made it up. ca. 1836-1839
Oil on canvas
46" x 33.25"
Smithsonian American Art Museum

While always acknowledging Audubon's artistic and marketing genius, Ken pulls no punches when he points out how Audubon's ambition, fragile ego and insecurities led him to lie, cheat and steal credit from his contemporaries in his effort to name and describe more birds than they had. As just two examples, evidence suggests that he stole a specimen of a newly discovered hawk from the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia so that he could name it for his friend and benefactor, Edward Harris. To this day, what probably would have been known as "Morton's Hawk" is now the Harris's Hawk. Audubon also fabricated several species as new species, including the "Washington Sea-Eagle", falsely claiming to have found a pair feeding young at a nest even after a supposed specimen was shown to be a juvenile Bald Eagle.

He was a charmer and a consummate salesman who exaggerated, plagiarized and outright lied when needed to promote his own image and tarnish the images of his contemporaries. Kenn points out that while "the one universal human superpower is that of selfjustification... it seems that Audubon was gifted

with this superpower more than most." Kenn concludes "Yes, he was a terrible person in many ways - an enslaver, a white supremacist, a scientific fraud - but there was still some beauti-

If you, like me, had reservations about the current movement to drop the name "Audubon" from many of our chapters (and perhaps eventually from our national society), this book just might raise your comfort level with these changes.

ful place inside him that could produce gorgeous works of genuine art..."

Much more than an exposé, Kaufman delves into various scientific topics, then enthralls the reader with prose on how birds captivate us to our souls and change lives in the process.

If you, like me, had reservations about the current movement to drop the name "Audubon" from many of our chapters (and perhaps eventually from our national society), this book just might raise your comfort level with these changes.

Tom Gatz is a retired wildlife biologist. He is a regular contributor to the Cactus Wren-dition.

Swainson's Thrushes among foliage of pokeweed.
Kenn Kaufman (in the style of J.J. Audubon)
2024

watercolor, gouache, and pencil on Arches paper
18" x 24"

Swainson's Thrushes are a common eastern migrant missed by Audubon and many other early ornithologists.



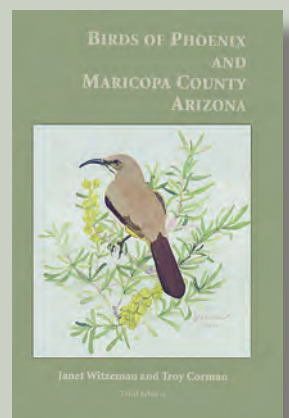
Audubon's Process

Audubon made watercolor field sketches from freshly killed specimens he pinned to a wire armature, which is why some of his birds look stilted. His sketches were enhanced with oils, chalk, pastel, etc. in the studio. He contracted engravers to copy and print his paintings in black and white, then hand-color with aquatint assembly-line-fashion by as many as 150 colorists, each adding one color to each print destined for the Elephant folio.

Available online and at local bookstores. Eighty two birding spots, maps species accounts, bar graphs of status, abundance, and seasonal occurrence, habitats and more. Proceeds support the conservation efforts of Maricopa Audubon Society.



Scan for vendor list.



From Egg to Sky: My Adventures in Condor Propagation

by Brendan Burns



Photo by The Peregrine Fund
Propagation Staff

On a cold March day I stand in a dark room. The windows are blacked out, the lights are off, the only illumination is a beam of light emanating from an oddly shaped lamp. I gently hold a drab pear-sized orb, nestling it delicately in the nest I've woven

with my fingers and palm. I place the orb against the light source. The orb begins to illuminate turning a rich amber color. Red lines radiate from a central point like a spiderweb. I hold the orb still, its rounded top cupping the light source, and wait. About five eternal seconds later, the light and the color of the orb change. "Visible movement!" I exclaim, reining in my bright-eyed excitement to appear professional and seasoned. Two seconds later, a shadow emerges from the amber cloud and reaches towards the wall of the orb. I count three digits on this shadow before it disappears back into the cloud. "Oh my gosh, it's kicking!" A smile drapes across my face as I take in the marvelous event I had just witnessed.

The orb I was holding was in fact one of the rarest items on earth, the egg of a California Condor *Gymnogyps californianus*. I was new to the scientific art of "candling," putting an egg up to a light source to check for fertility and development. My veterinary background, focusing mainly on birds, had taught me much about what is normal for adult birds of various species, and my career as a birder had shown me the many wonders of avian diversity. But seeing this little foot press up against the shell of the egg I was holding seized my wonder and left me yearning for more knowledge.

Four months prior I was driving past Teec Nos Pos across the Arizona state line feeling bittersweet after a breakup had taken me away from the amazing birdlife of Arizona, my friends in the Maricopa County birding community, and my hopes of being within eBird's top five birders in the county for the year - a goal I had worked so hard to maintain since January 2023. With an unfulfilling job and no permanent ties in Arizona, I decided to move back home to Colorado to start the job search to begin living the life that I wanted, a life dedicated to the conservation of endangered birds. I tearfully said goodbye to the charismatic Verdins and Black Phoebes from my backyard patio and began to re-familiarize myself with the antics of the Black-Billed Magpies and Downy Woodpeckers that I had grown up with. After a month of the job search rollercoaster, of CVs and cover letters, rejection emails, and noresponses, I came across a position for a propagation grantee at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, ID, a yearlong position that would give me the skills to work with endangered birds and the knowledge to manage a conservation breeding program. While I missed the warm winters that I had grown accustomed to in Phoenix for the last 3 years, this was an opportunity I could not pass up. Luckily, I got the job.

I quickly learned that keeping track of the largest captive population of California Condors was just as much a mental workout as a physical one. Each condor, equipped with patagial tags showing a part of their studbook number, needed to be accounted for. It took me a while to get a grasp on who is who. I quickly learned that a tag saying "80" did not necessarily mean that was Condor #80, but instead "580", and while most female Condors have tags on their left wing, males on their right, this was a guide - not a rule, and I found many exceptions. The physical demand of caring for the flock was equally

daunting. Stillborn calves collected weekly from dairies two hours away in Twin Falls, Idaho were fed out biweekly, a laborious effort requiring at least four people to carry the carcasses into the breeding pens. I quickly became "nose blind" or at least tolerant of the sour, stale, earthy "smell of death," the smell coming from the condor barns as well as from defrosted rats and rabbits used to supplement the condors' calcium.

Laying season began towards the end of February. The usually mundane task of observing the birds through about 80 security cameras became exciting as birds started to display - inflating their fleshy pink air sacs in their throat and head, draping out their massive tuxedocolored wings, drooping their massive inflated necks, then swinging them across their bodies left then right like a Blues musician taken into a trance by the rhythm of a song only they could hear. It was then that I began to see the individual personalities of the birds. The hopeless romantic males who showed unrequited affection for their geneticist-chosen mates as the uninterested females toyed with half-frozen bunnies on the snow below. The old, yet still charismatic lovers who have been doing this same dance for the past two decades, and new pairs whose regard for their partners, recently considered only roommates and food thieves, blossomed from waves of hormones into love. Before long, eggs started to appear. The team celebrated as we watched one female push out the first, humungous egg while her overzealous mate intrusively peered under her wings to check her progress, which promptly resulted in a sharp bite to the face.

After two weeks of the parents splitting incubation duties equally, the eggs were swapped out with dummy eggs in a fashion not unlike Indiana Jones, trading out a precious artifact for an inexpensive decoy. Here the candling process and my love for avian propagation started. The first time I saw candling, staring



Photo by The Peregrine Fund Propagation Staff

into a seemingly empty egg and seeing the embryo jolt for the first time, my world paused and my mind became lost attempting to grasp the incredible value of the egg held

in my manager's hands. That little jolt revealed an ancient past. Each magnificent condor effortlessly commanding the skies over the past 2.6 million years once started as a little jolt within a fragile egg. This jolt was also the future, the next individual in a great line of condors, a species precariously close to extinction. This jolt was hope, hope that the efforts of these birds and those who dedicate their lives to save them are not in vain, that conservation work and humanity can fix our errors and provide a future in which we can continue to live amongst these lords of the air.

Fifty-two days after the eggs are laid, candling reveals the little embryos taking their first breaths within the air cells of their eggs. I learned how to correct mal-positioned eggs and emergency procedures to maintain the vitality of an egg until hatching. After the eggs pipped they were swapped once more into the nest box of their parents or foster parents. We eagerly awaited the reactions of the parents as they drew their heads close to their eggs which had begun to chirp softly. I then witnessed the dedicated parenting of these birds - males and females dueling for who gets to brood their precious nestling; intimate preening sessions by each parent. I watched as pixelated white specks on the monitors quickly grew into recognizable shapes, then seemingly overnight pin feathers emerged from their now-stained down. Watching the nestlings has its own joys, seeing them wing-flapping - begging for food, and make sense of their world (a wooden

nest box), exploring all the different textures, tastes and amusements. I loved watching the nestlings manipulate the large, molted primaries of their parents, grabbing the shaft with their soft beaks and gnawing at it or playfully tossing it into a corner

Summer arrived, and the nestlings were getting bigger and bolder each day. During heat waves, baby condors sleep splayed on the ground, frightening me into thinking they had expired. We saw unprecedented fledging during these heat waves, increasing both the propagation team and the condor parent's anxiety. One nestling, impatient for a meal delivery, left the ledge just days after leaving the nest box to get a rabbit carcass for itself. Usually, this behavior occurs around 160 days old but this precocial nestling decided it was old enough at just 107 days. After some boundary setting by the parents, the nestling settled into exploring the rest of the aviary and bathing in the water feature, saturating its grey down so much it became unwieldy for him to walk.

As summer drew to a close, I got my first chance to handle the condors, restraining them for their biannual West Nile Virus vaccine. I have restrained over 80 species of birds ranging from 12-gram zebra finches to a 45-pound emu for others to treat. Condors are the most challenging bird I ever had to restrain. I was first tasked with netting and holding one of the largest males in the breeding colony, a 22-pound bird named Inja (104) who was also my favorite due to his attentiveness to his chick and tolerance of his inexperienced mate's apathy towards incubation duties. After netting him, I squatted down to grab his head. The net was removed, my hand securing the base of his beak and my opposite arm taking the brunt of his weight as I stood up.

Unlike the much heavier emu and other large birds I had worked with, I could feel the sheer power in Inja's muscles. Sweat dripping down my face, I resisted the force of his wings attempting to open between my arms. I completely underestimated his strength. My other hand, occupied with the dangerous, shear-like beak, held on for dear life as Inja secreted mucous from his nares that lubricated his face in an attempt to evade my grip - a technique many of the older, experienced birds learned to escape the pesky apes that occasionally captured them. It felt as if I was holding on to a slimy frog with a snake's body. The air sacs in his neck were now fully inflated and just as strong as his wings as he tried to wriggle free as the vaccine was

administered. I released 104 back into his enclosure and tossed him some of the rabbits that had lured him into the trap - compensation for the trouble we put him through. Covered in sweat, my face red as the adrenaline started to ease, I reviewed the events that had just unfolded. It wasn't the most skilled restraint, yet neither I, Inja nor any other team member was injured, making for my first

successful handling of the largest bird in North America.

While much of the attention in the previous months was focused on the fragile nestlings and their parents, we now shifted to monitoring the social aviary. Inside lived, 15 juveniles - last year's fledglings that had graduated to "Condor Elementary School", and two older birds without breeding recommendations who acted as mentors to the curious, naive fledglings.

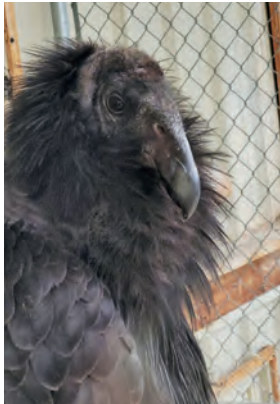
Watching the social dynamics of these youngsters was like watching a playground. A bird would find a stick or a piece of rabbit and begin playing with it, drawing the attention of other birds who



The author with 104. Photo by The Peregrine Fund Propagation Staff

From Egg to Sky: My Adventures in Condor Propagation

Continued from page 17



Juvenile condor
Photo by the author

now needed to investigate this “find.” A larger flock would soon gather and games of keep-away and tug-of-war would ensue. I watched as birds with access to both a condor-sized bathing pool

and a large water bucket would instead drink from the puddles created by the cooling sprinklers, much like how wild birds would drink from the tinajas and potholes in the canyons of the American West. Most exciting were the feeding events. Watching 17 birds tear into a calf

carcass, dragging the mangled corpse around the exhibit, sticking their perfectly adapted heads into the openings was like watching a morbid version of Hungry Hungry Hippos. Communal feeders with a social hierarchy that determined feeding order, this

is how condors have fed for millennia, long before western expansion decimated their numbers. This is how wild birds should act, which was a good thing because their next step in life would be much less controlled.

The last week of August a team member and I took the journey of a lifetime, an 11-hour drive from Boise to the release site at the base of the Vermilion Cliffs. In an incredibly foul-smelling sprinter van with 12 disgruntled condors in back, we drove in absolute silence so as not to acquaint the birds with human sounds.

As we passed through Kanab, Utah heading south, I smiled as I saw the familiar “Welcome to Arizona” sign. I was back. Almost a year prior, I had left Arizona, lost and heartbroken, uncertain of what the future held. Today, I returned, not just a birder but a conservationist - making a living saving endangered birds. It was everything I could have hoped for. As we rounded the final turn from the Kaibab Plateau, the setting sun illuminated the Vermilion Cliffs a vibrant red and coral. My heart raced, as those cliffs signaled we were in Condor Country.

The next day we transferred the birds to 4-wheel drive SUVs and traversed the hour-long sand and rock road up to their next temporary home - the pre-release aviary. For the next three weeks, the birds would get acclimated, watch the wild birds on the outside, and be vaccinated for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) before being released. The stress of being responsible for the birds was lifted, and the next few days we spent with the field crew, exchanging stories from the captive and wild viewpoints. While our stories of the breeding birds in Boise did not nearly rival the stories the field crew had of their free-flying birds, a constant theme emerged - almost all of their stories ended in tragedy. This past year was incredibly rough for the Arizona-Utah condor population. News outlets around the country reported on the HPAI outbreak at Vermilion Cliffs which killed 21 condors. This horrific loss was coupled with one of the continued threats to California Condors - lead poisoning. Many of the birds lost by both HPAI and lead poisoning were older, experienced, reliable breeders - pillars of the population. Generations of crew members had tracked them. The field team spoke of them like they were departed family. Memories of these birds shone in their eyes as they shared their stories. My excitement about delivering the birds that I had watched grow quickly turned to anxiety over their possible fates. My mind churned that night



Juvenile with Common Raven, Vermilion Cliffs.
Photo by Matt van Wallene

with questions like, “Did I just deliver these birds to a foreseeable fate? What about the nestlings I had watched since they were just clumps of cells in an egg? Would their release be part of the next sad story?” My naive excitement faded as I realized the potential costs of condor recovery. These questions were followed by “What if 1221 is successful and fledges her own young? What adventures would these birds have as they soared over the canyons of the Southwest? Think of what this new infusion of birds will do to the population!” As I grappled with these questions, I was reminded of Gerald Durrell’s words: “In conservation, the motto should be, ‘never say die’”. This optimism, while not written in the job description, is vital when working with Condors, or any endangered species. Despite facing near-extinction and countless setbacks, California Condors and those who dedicate their lives to saving them have endured.

My past year with these magnificent birds has transformed me. It has shown



The author on site.
Photo by The Peregrine Fund Propagation Staff

me the wonder in the earliest spark of life and the majesty of one of the largest wingspans (9.5') on earth. I celebrated milestones and mourned losses. While I still miss the birds and birders of Maricopa County who helped foster my passion for all things feathered, I'm grateful for taking this leap into the unknown. It has allowed me to fully spread my wings, prove that the skills I gained in Arizona are relevant to conservation, and cement my place as just a small piece in the ongoing saga of North America's masters of the sky.



Adults in Zion National Park.
Photo by Cindy Marple



Adult with full crop, Navajo Bridge, Glen Canyon.
Photo by Matt van Wallene

Plight of the Condor

About 10,000 years ago, California Condors survived a mass extinction of large mammals, both predators and their prey whose remains condors fed on. But their range collapsed. Then, in just 150 years, western expansion starting in the 19th Century caused a second bottleneck due to egg collecting, habitat loss, inadvertent trapping and poisoning by federal predator and rodent control to benefit ranchers, lead and DDT poisoning, power-line collisions, and shooting for sport, collections, or curiosity. Lead poisoning is ingestion of gut piles left by hunters. Lead poisoning can be eliminated by using copper ammunition or removing gut piles. Currently, 85% of hunters in the area are complying with these voluntary restrictions. With the condors' low reproductivity, every take impacted their population which fell to just 22 individuals by 1982 -Editor



Vermilion Cliffs. Photo by Matt van Wallene



Brendan Burns is a Propagation Grantee at The Peregrine Fund's World Center for Birds of Prey in Boise, ID. Visit, join, or donate to peregrinefund.org.

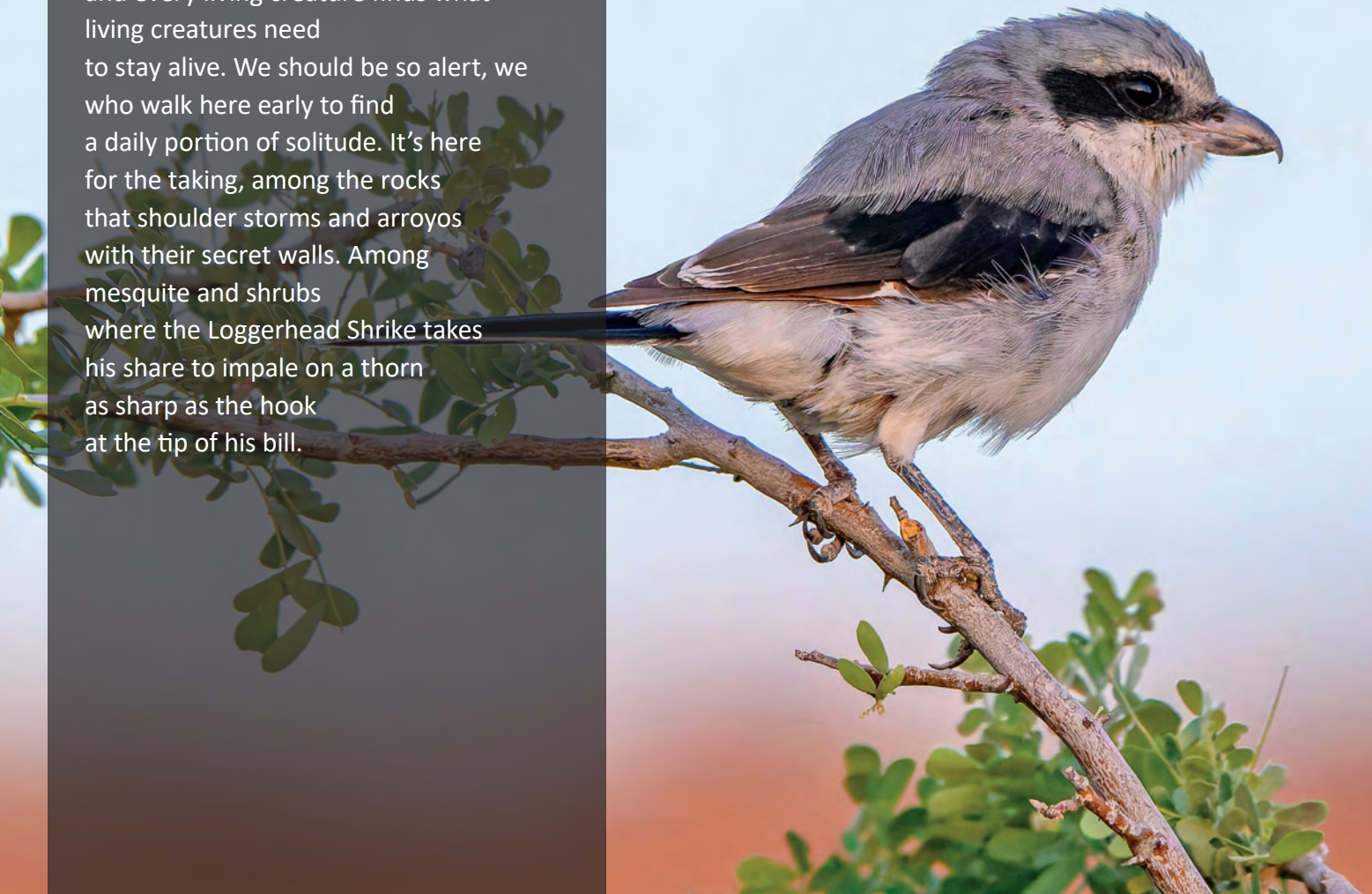


Adult soaring.
Photo by Pierre Deviche

Loggerhead Shrike

Poem by David Chorlton. Photograph by Sean McEntee

In a dry palo verde at desert's edge
with branches dark as drought
the bold eye stripe gives him a name.
First glance suggests
a mockingbird, but the body
is rounder and
the plumage bluntly grey.
It has been a short yet pleasant walk
along the familiar trail
beside which the fallen saguaro
from springtime is reclaimed
by the earth and the lizard who wriggles
into what remains of the ribs.
Still hot and nothing wasted
in a landscape without fear.
It's where the broken earth is beautiful,
the silence tastes of stones
and every living creature finds what
living creatures need
to stay alive. We should be so alert, we
who walk here early to find
a daily portion of solitude. It's here
for the taking, among the rocks
that shoulder storms and arroyos
with their secret walls. Among
mesquite and shrubs
where the Loggerhead Shrike takes
his share to impale on a thorn
as sharp as the hook
at the tip of his bill.



Announcements *continued from p. 3*

populations. The GBBC was the first online citizen science project to display results on wild birds in near real time. Watch for 15 minutes or more, at least once over the four days and enter your data on Merlin or eBird. See birdcount.org.

Saturday 29 March 2025, 4-9PM

Fountain Hills Dark Sky Festival

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.

Chapter Name Change

After some discussion, the Board of Maricopa Audubon Society has approved changing the name of our chapter. Please look for future announcements regarding this change. Questions, comments, concerns? Contact any Board member (see backpage). You may also want to read Tom Gatz's book review on p. 13.

Herb Fibel Big Sit! Report

On 26 October 2024, 16 birders enjoyed a beautiful morning at Granite Reef for the 28th Annual Big Sit! Fundraiser. We had superb looks at a Belted Kingfisher working the river right in front of us, kiting, diving, flapping along the river and rattling. Other highlights were a Crissal Thrasher, Merlin, Coopers Hawk perched very close, a pair of Soras and our final species of the day - a Greater Roadrunner working the picnic grounds. We tallied 52 species. A big thanks goes to Kathe Anderson for once again organizing this event, and to **Cindy Marple** for co-leading!



All donations benefit Youth Scholarships (Audubon Camp, AZFO Annual Meetings, etc.). Pay by cash, check or credit card at member meetings, on our website (Events - Big Sit!) or mail checks payable to Maricopa Audubon Society, P.O. Box 65401, Phoenix, AZ 85082-5401. Write "Big Sit!" in the memo line. Include your email to receive monthly meeting reminders.

Donate \$25 or more and get a one-year membership to MAS. If donating online, note under Additional Information "Auto membership". Include your postal address to receive the quarterly Cactus Wren-dition. If donating by check, write "Auto Join-Big Sit!" in the memo line and mail to the above address. Include your mailing address to receive our printed quarterly newsletter.

Programs *continued from p. 2*

Ross. David has immense patience to remain "in place" for long periods of time to photograph birds and other animals, and capture the most breathtaking shots.

Having lived in remote villages in Dominica, Windward Islands, and Nunavut, Canada, Diane really appreciates the local people. She particularly enjoys how they live their everyday lives, their 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 of photography, Diane has David to thank. After meeting David, travel and photography have become an integral part of their life together.



April 1, 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 2 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 presents slide shows at local camera clubs and Audubon Societies.

Nature Through the Artist's Eye

Metal Art by Matt Wilson



Matt Wilson uses everyday materials to create unique artwork. Using spoons, multi-tools, scrap metal, and reclaimed wood, he sculpts species native to his South Carolina home. Wilson believes that up-cycling affirms his belief that appreciating and conserving our natural resources will help make our environment one in which we desire to live. He hopes his sculptures will inspire others to appreciate the value of simple, neglected items from which his creations are made.

Wilson was born and raised in Greenville, S.C., and from a young age showed an innate creative talent. From high school he attended studio art classes at the Fine Arts Center of Greenville, the first specialized art school in the state. From 2002 to 2005, Matt studied drawing and painting at Winthrop University in Rock Hill, SC. In 2006, he moved to Charleston and was offered a unique opportunity – learn to weld and





become the resident artist for Detyens Shipyards. Wilson builds metal models of the ships that Detyens services. The models are given to the port engineers to thank them for their business. When he's not building ships, he's working on commissioned pieces or having fun producing new creations.



See more of Matt's work at airtightartwork.com
Contact him at airtightartwork@gmail.com

Maricopa Audubon Society

P.O. Box 65401

Phoenix, AZ 85082-5401



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MONTHLY MEETING

Please see meeting information on page 2 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 April 1st. Subscriptions are pro-rated.

SUBMISSIONS

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