



# DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

Educating and inspiring our community to protect and preserve birds, wildlife, and their habitats

VOLUME 2 - SPRING 2008 NEWSLETTER



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*White-winged Dove on Saguaro Cactus (Gilbert Riparian Preserve) - Cindy Marple Photo*



# A SHORT COURSE ON FEDERAL WATER LAWS

*Don Farmer,  
DRAS Conservation Director*

It may have been a while since you thought about the water that comes out of the tap when you turn it on. With our busy schedules, we all take water resources for granted now and then. As a group, Audubon folk generally think favorably towards resource conservation. After all, healthy bird populations owe a good deal of their existence to a clean water supply and water-dependant habitats. While this idea is true on a worldwide scale, it is especially important in our dry state. The human need for water most often takes precedence over the water needs of wildlife and fortunately, it does not need to be that way.

Historically, water has been core to the earth's human successes and failures. Only during the past century has man developed the technology to provide a reliable supply of clean water to an increasing human population. Before our nation's expansion era, clean water generally flowed from undisturbed watersheds and aquifers. As our country's population expanded, great pressures were put on the water resource. Water diversions, pollution, and degraded watersheds were by-products of this time of explosive growth. Whether it was common sense or just plain desperation, in the 1970s Congress passed a series of new legislation that were designed to protect our basic right to have access to an adequate supply of clean water. In this series of laws were the Federal Water Pollution Act (1972), Clean Water Act (1977) and the Water Quality Act (1987). It was the intent of these laws to, "establish[ed] the national objective of restoring and maintaining the chemical, physical, and biological integrity, of the waters of the United States and recognize that achieving this objective requires uniform, minimum national water quality and aquatic ecosystem protection standards to restore and maintain the natural structures and functions of the aquatic ecosystems of the United States". <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/C?c110:/temp/~c110nHjk14>

There is downside. These meaningful laws designed to protect our water, have been subjected to political shenanigans ever since their passage. Blurring the line between right and wrong are many other needs. Our productive economy, based on consumerism, generally is not water friendly and that's where clean water issues take a political right turn. During the past seven years we have seen the power in our nation's water laws eroded by pressure from industry, development and even executive decree. In Arizona, the management of montane wetlands, riparian streams and rivers and even our ephemeral desert arroyos have all been negatively affected in favor of industry. The issue has become so acute, that recently, two of Arizona's

rivers have been placed on American Rivers Most Endangered List. [www.americanrivers.org](http://www.americanrivers.org)

Extractive use on our public lands has become more intense. These public lands are our watersheds. Mining, livestock, power distribution, road building and irresponsible use among other things have increased the ante. Development in Arizona has long been the enemy of open space, clean air and water. Development brings an increased need for electricity to power our needs. This increased dependence on electricity brings upstream and downstream consequences. Firstly, electrical generation combustion gases include acids, sulfur, nitrates, mercury and other harmful compounds. After being released into the atmosphere these compounds are brought down by rainfall in harmful concentrations thus polluting the upstream water supply. The downstream effect of electrical generation is even more profound. Water, whether it be surface water or groundwater is needed in vast amounts to condense steam for re-use in the generation process. Up to 52% of our available water supply is used to generate our electricity.

<http://water.usgs.gov/watuse/pdf1995/pdf/trends.pdf>

That cloud of water vapor rising above the generation plant's cooling towers on a cold day is a virtual river of water flowing up into the sky being lost to any downstream need. Our economic dependence on development must begin to take into account the burden it places on clean, usable water.

Back in the 1960s the environmental movement was becoming more ardent in their mission to conserve natural resources. It was in this era when David Brower a founding member of "Friends of the Earth" coined the term, "Think Globally – Act Locally". Those four words still offer a great wisdom and vision for us to live by. We all care deeply about our environment, clean air and water. Audubon members by our nature have taken a higher stance on the environment. We place the importance of healthy watersheds that support natural ecosystems and self-sustaining wildlife populations above most other needs. That's the "think globally" part.

For us to "act locally" we can take a few simple but effective steps. First on the list is to embrace and educate others about an Audubon lifestyle at home. Some of the "Audubon at Home in Arizona" concepts are truly clean water savers. The water specific items in the program are: Consume Less and Consume Responsibly – Reduce Domestic Use of Fossil Fuels – Reduce Transport Use of Fossil Fuels – Reduce Other Use of Fossil Fuels – Use Water Harvesting Techniques and Be an Advocate for Your Environment. <http://audubonathome.org/>.

*continued on page 9*



# AUDUBON AT HOME

Desert Rivers rolls out our version of National Audubon's program to help you live a "greener" lifestyle

Krys Hammers



Our life on earth depends on natural systems that provide us with air to breathe, water to drink, food to eat, and sources of energy and raw materials. Overburdening those natural systems can change the natural equilibrium. Audubon at Home promotes positive change in our daily activities to make our life on earth more sustainable. Careful consideration of our actions can help maintain healthy habitats that can support birds and other wildlife.

Desert Rivers rolled out our own Arizona version of the Audubon at Home program, the National Audubon program during our January meeting. Rob Fergus, Senior Scientist in the Urban Bird Conservation division of National Audubon and Coordinator of the Audubon at Home program, was on hand to inspire us to live more lightly or greener.

There are two things that I really like about the program. One is that it involves and engages everyone to do what they can to make the environment a little better. The second thing is it asks people to make a commitment to make changes by taking a pledge. It's a good thing when the environment becomes a political issue, but it's even better when any individual can make a difference in the world by doing simple things. The brochure that the Arizona Audubon Council produced asks us to incorporate conservation choices into daily lifestyle decisions at home and at work. Many of us already recycle, but maybe we could go a bit farther and start recycling programs at work. It is also important to close the recycling loop and buy products made from recycled material. Perhaps we should look twice at products that are packaged in layers of non-recyclable materials.

It is also important to reduce our consumption of fossil fuels. While a hybrid car isn't the best choice for everyone, we can decrease the amount that we drive, carpool or even ride a bike whenever feasible. With the new light rail system coming, we may be able to increase our use of public transportation. One simple way to increase your gas mileage and reduce your carbon emissions is to keep your tires inflated at the proper level.

We can also take notice and choose to purchase products which are produced closer to home. Probably the most important resource to us in Arizona is water. In the arid desert, water conservation is critical. It is hard for many of us to let go of green grassy lawns, but there are many advantages to desert landscaping. You can have a lush desert yard with plants in bloom year round. Not only do Native Plants need less water, they are not as likely to be susceptible to our frosts. You can plan a yard that is maintenance-free. Imagine not having to mow the grass when it hits 110 degrees. The birds nest in our thorny desert plants and seem to love the seeds and flowers of our native plants too.

Since the National Audubon Society's Audubon at Home program materials were not geared toward our desert climate, the AZ Audubon Council decided there was a need to develop materials that were more appropriate for Arizona. Some excellent talented people stepped up to help make that happen. Paul Green, Executive Director of Tucson Audubon, and some of his colleagues came up with the text. They wrote about things that make the most difference for us in Arizona. Paul's wife, Eng-Li Green did the layout for us. From our own chapter, Karen Stucke did a wonderful job on the cover illustration. Their efforts our appreciated throughout the state. In addition, thanks to Lori Singleton, SRP agreed to print the brochure for us. At Desert Rivers we've gone a little bit further and were able to get our membership started with recycling by giving out reusable grocery bags, donated by Whole Foods; and CFL light bulbs donated by SRP. In addition, when we get ready to re-landscape using native plants, Arizona Cactus Sales will give our membership a 10% discount. Just show your membership card and ask for the discount.

We hope to continue to have speakers, workshops, and items to help those who have taken the pledge with recycling, xeriscaping, and green energy alternatives for the desert. You can take the Healthy Planet Pledge at [www.desertriversaudubon.org](http://www.desertriversaudubon.org), and see additional information on our "Audubon at Home" web pages. These pages have links to several sites that will give you ideas on many other ways you can conserve and recycle - check them regularly for more content as we continue to expand and develop them. You can also learn more from National Audubon's website at [www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org). Place your cursor on their "Audubon at Home" button on the home page and then click on the drop down menu to see various categories of information.

*"Let every individual and institution now think and act as a responsible trustee of Earth, seeking choices in ecology, economics and ethics that will provide a sustainable future, eliminate pollution, poverty and violence, awaken the wonder of life and foster peaceful progress in the human adventure."*

— John McConnell, founder of International Earth Day



# AUDUBON NATURE CENTER

"Connecting People With Nature" at  
the new Audubon Nature Center

Michael Rupp, Photos: Mike Rupp Renderings: WeddleGilmore Architects



The Nina Mason Pulliam Audubon Nature Center will soon be a reality, as building gets underway in April this year. It's been a long time coming, with a capital campaign that started about five years ago with Sam Campana and Randy Schilling of Audubon Arizona, the state Audubon office. As part of National Audubon's plan to build nature centers in every state, this center will serve Valley residents with a 7000 square foot LEED certified "green" building that will provide classrooms, interactive displays, a meeting room, and an observation room that looks out over an area of the surrounding wetland habitat. But the real attraction will be the 595-acre Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area in which the Center sits under a lease with the City of Phoenix. This area is a five-mile stretch of the Salt River that has been transformed from a dry wasteland into a lush riparian corridor by the City of Phoenix, the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the Maricopa County Flood Control District. For more information on the project, please see <http://www.phoenix.gov/riosalado>. It's within this wonderful riparian/desert habitat that the Center staff will work it's miracles in the lives of the estimated 8,000 elementary school kids per year that will visit the Center on school field trips to participate in a variety of programs and activities that seek to "connect kids with nature". Many of the Center programs involve repeated visits to the habitat in order to learn about birds and birdwatching, mammals, water quality, river ecology, and ancient cultures, and all of these programs contain a conservation message that we believe is so vital to enriching our



Class walking through Rio Salado habitat



Cathy Wise, biologist/teacher

children's lives and give them a sense of "place" within our local biosphere and in a greater sense, the Earth we all inhabit. Audubon anticipates that many of these kids will be inspired to seek careers in biology, become youth leaders, and perhaps become the green voters and concerned citizens we need to protect the habitats in which we all live. In this "wired" society that we live, often kids grow up without any real "nature experience" or affinity for the outdoors, and they miss experiences that can help them in several areas of life. Audubon programs are in tune with the latest findings in children's environmental education, and seek to introduce children to the wonders of the natural world through hands-on, inquiry-based, exploration and discovery of the wonderful Salt River habitat. But, the kids aren't the only ones that will have all the fun!

As the Center gets underway, there will be a need for volunteers to do some teaching, leading, and a myriad of tasks associated with it's operations. Now is a good time for birders, biologists, teachers, and those who wish to be trained, to get in touch with Cathy Wise at the Audubon office to learn what opportunities exist and what training may be needed. You can reach her at 602-468-6480. As a leader on some of the Audubon programs, I can tell you that the rewards are great. It's common to hear kids say "this is the best field trip we've ever had!"

The Center location is the south bank of the river, on the east side of Central Avenue. It will be accessed by turning into an entrance that leads down to the Center and habitat. Presently, birders are visiting the north side of the river, east of Central Avenue, where there are facilities already in place, and roads and trails to wander around the habitat in search of the 200+ bird species that have already been seen there. In addition to the expected Arizona species, the "Rio Salado" has it's share of rarities and uncommon birds- most recently, a Painted Bunting, Rusty Blackbird, and Varied Thrush. A bird list is kept on the city's website. To find out more about birding at the "Rio Salado" see Tom Gaskill's article on the adjacent page.



Young naturalists



Southeast view of future Nature Center



# BIRDING THE RIO SALADO

Discover great birding at the site of the new Nature Center  
Tom Gaskill, Photos : Cindy Marple

It was a good omen. On Nov. 5, 2005, Rio Salado opened to the public. A crowd gathered under a large white tent to listen to an array of dignitaries. Above, a flock of 35 white pelicans soared on thermals created by the tent. I certainly thank the dignitaries for their hard work in making the Rio a reality, but I didn't hear a word they said. I was watching the pelicans.

Since then, I've been a volunteer at the Rio. In more than two years, we've added another 240 species to the bird list, and we've learned what to expect at different times of the year. In this column, I'll provide some insights about what to expect in the upcoming season.

Sparrows increase in April. Last year saw a huge migrant fallout of sparrows and towhees in mid-April. Watch for large flocks on the south bank between Central and 7th Street. Brewer's should be bouncing about as if filled with helium, gleefully singing their complex songs. Black-throated come through the Rio twice a year—April and late August to mid-September.

Warblers are the most broadly represented family at Rio Salado, and spring is the best season for them. Orange-crowns and yellow-rumps will gradually filter out through May. Late spring is our only chance to see yellow-rumped warblers in their dramatic breeding plumage in the lowlands. Yellow warblers and common yellowthroats sing in profusion in the channel when the weather warms and breed at the Rio.

Wilson's warblers pass through in waves all spring



Orange-crowned Warbler



Western Tanager

and often sing in the willows east of the demonstration wetland. Other warblers appear in a predictable progression. Lucy's and an increased number of Black-throated Grays begin arriving by mid-March and are most common in early April. Townsend's and MacGillivray's are most common through April. Virginia's bring up the rear in early May.

Yellow-breasted chats are the last of the warblers to arrive. Expect their maniacal chortling and chattering beginning in May. They are common in the willows in the channel and near the warbler waterfall.

A great spot for warblers is in the willows uphill from the warbler waterfall. Follow the paved



Wilson's Warbler

path on the upper bank from the Central Ave parking area. When the sun first hits that line of willows in the morning, the warblers come out for breakfast. Wilson's and Lucy's love that area. Look for MacGillivray's in the low brush near the demo wetland and the "warbler waterfall" east of it. Late April and early May is the peak season for migrating summer tanagers and lazuli buntings. Both are common near the demo wetland and in the cottonwood forest. Migrant orioles add to the colorful show.

As the weather warms, much of the bird action moves away from the Central Ave area. Pied-billed grebes and green herons will retreat to the channel to breed. Cinnamon teal females will vanish as they head for their nests in the reedbeds. Lesser nighthawks breed and barn owls hunt at the 19th Ave Superfund site in the summer. Park at the turnout on the east side of 19th Ave, just north of the bridge, at dusk to watch the show.

Two events of note will happen this spring. The newest reach of the project, from the I-10 bridge to 16th Street, will be opening soon. The shallows in the area should be superb shorebird habitat. Also, April 19 (before it gets too hot) will be the Rio's celebration of International Migratory Bird Day. Events will begin at 8AM at Central Ave.

The Rio Salado website (<http://phoenix.gov/riosalado/>) has an updated bird checklist, and a list of upcoming programs. You can also email the Rio ([riosalado@phoenix.gov](mailto:riosalado@phoenix.gov)) and ask to be put on the email list for automatic email updates of upcoming events and volunteer opportunities.

Editor's note : Scheduled field trips to the Rio Salado Habitat can be found on the Desert Rivers' website. Tom Gaskill leads field trips there every two weeks as well, and that schedule can be found at : <http://phoenix.gov/riosalado/> The location is the northeastern "corner" of Central Avenue and the Salt River. The entrance is on the north side of the bridge, at the sign and gate.



Lucy's Warbler



# Spring's Harbingers Here Are Hawks! ✈ ✈

Article and photos : Jim Burns



Adult Zone-tailed Hawk

For much of the country and most of its birders, one of the first harbingers of warm weather is the return of the warblers, small, colorful, and eagerly anticipated for the beauty of their song and plumage. Here in Arizona, though, March is already springtime, and the heralds of the season here are two birds from a family at the opposite end of the species spectrum—birds we admire for their position at the top of the food chain and consider part of our "charismatic megafauna" which survive by beak and talon.

Here in Arizona spring returns on the wings of two unique raptors, Common Black-Hawk and Zone-tailed Hawk. Both are buteos, a family of daytime hunters characterized by broad wings and short tails usually seen soaring overhead, screaming with defiance. Both in their own special way, however, break the mold of the buteo template.

Black-Hawks don't soar very much, they splash around in creek beds, and they call with a series of squeaky, staccato whistles. And they aren't common either, at least north of the border, where they are found only along streambeds in Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and the Davis Mountains of Texas. Zone-taileds do hunt on the soar, but frequently not as lone individuals but in kettles with Turkey Vultures. They have adopted a unique hunting method known as behavioral mimicry which affords them a much broader ecological niche than Black-Hawks, though their range is similar—central and southeast Arizona, New Mexico, and much of west Texas.

Both Common Black-Hawks and Zone-tailed Hawks are black hawks. That sentence you just read both explains and justifies why the names of specific birds species must be capitalized in writing. It also explains why, without sharp optical and mental focus, a birder may easily confuse these look alike raptors both in flight and perched, but before we address identification problems, let's set the history scene for each of these special hawks.

About 200 pairs of Common Black-Hawks migrate to Arizona, the northern apogee of their breeding range, each spring.



Adult Common Blackhawk



Juvenile Common Blackhawk

You should begin seeing them overhead during the first week of March, and by the end of March territorial birds may be observed in spectacular courtship display involving high speed dives into parachute mode at treetop level, yellow legs dangling below the body. The scientific name for the species is *Buteogallus anthracinus*, and if you remember your Latin you'll recognize *anthracinus* as "coal black." This is a beautiful, dark raptor with a single wide white tail band, yellow facial skin, and extraordinarily broad wings. When seen overhead, it soars on flat wings rather than with the dihedral (upswept wings) of our turkey vultures.

Common Black-Hawks in Arizona are strictly limited to permanent or semi-permanent streams. Nests are bundles of sticks placed in a high crotch of the tallest streamside cottonwood or sycamore. The male brings nesting materials, the female models or remodels. Nests are often reused for many years but fresh greenery, which acts as a natural pesticide, is incorporated each spring. This may also mark active nests for later passing migrants, and it certainly serves this

purpose for sharp-eyed birders. Black-Hawks are particularly sensitive to nest disturbance. If you find a nest, stay in your car or observe from a distance. Habitat and hunting methods of all raptors conform to prey preference. Since this species subsists primarily on aquatic animals, unlike most buteos it still-hunts from low perches beneath the tree canopy. Leopard frogs are a favored item, but all raptors are opportunists and Common Black-Hawks will take small mammals, fish, birds, and

lizards. I've seen more than one Black-Hawk flying with a large snake dangling from its talons, and I've watched a Black-Hawk walking along the east end of Aravaipa Creek, in the water, sloshing from rock to rock, coming up with minnows just as a heron or egret might do—not your father's buteo! Our other spring black hawk, the Zone-tailed, is also migratory though a few have overwintered north of the border in recent years. This is *Buteo albonotatus* and most begin arriving in Arizona during the second week of March. This is a beautiful, dark raptor with multiple white tail bands, one wide and one narrow on males, two narrow on females. From above, these bands will appear gray. When seen overhead, Zonies soar with the dihedral (upswept wings) of the Turkey Vultures with which they often associate. Zone-taileds most typically nest in tall, isolated trees along canyon streams, but sometimes use hillside evergreens or cliff ledges and grottoes. Like Black-Hawks, Zonies' build large stick platform nests often used several years in succession, a few sprigs of fresh greenery newly added each spring. Zone-tailed nests are usually well hidden in the upper reaches of the nest tree, and it is almost impossible to discover a nest before the parents discover you, protesting your approach with long, thin, piercing screams. Be careful, as Zone-taileds have been known to attack human intruders who get too close during nesting season. Here's how behavioral mimicry works as practiced by Zone-tailed Hawks. With wings in a dihedral and silvery flight feathers giving the underwing the same two-toned appearance as Turkey Vultures, Zonies rock from side to side like TVs as they ride the thermals. It is not only birders who often dismiss Zone-taileds as just another vulture. Prey species, habituated to the more abundant, harmless, carrion-seeking vultures, do too, and raptor biologists feel Zone-taileds have adapted this behavior as a hunting technique. When a Zonie in a vulture kettle spots prey, it will continue to circle but slip slowly lower and to the outside edge of its hosts, pass from sight behind intervening cover such as a rock or bush, then strike unexpectedly from behind the temporary concealment.

Seen soaring with the vultures or hunting individually, Zone-taileds glide along slowly, appearing casual or even lazy, but they are capable of breathtakingly rapid, falcon-like stoops when prey is sighted. They subsist primarily on small mammals and lizards, but will also take large insects and small birds up to the size of quail, sometimes snatching these latter items with their talons while in full flight. Broken terrain may be the preferred habitat because the cover it provides is so well-suited to the hunting style these buteos have perfected. What field marks should key the identification when birders see a black hawk, overhead or perched? Common Black-Hawks are loners, associated in breeding season almost exclusively with riparian areas. Even at some distance their distinctive broad wing shape and striking tail pattern will stand out. On perched birds look for three distinguishing Black/Zonie characteristics: the Black-Hawk cere (bare skin above the upper mandible), lores (bare skin between the upper mandible and eye), and legs are all bright orange-yellow, whereas the Zonie's cere and legs are pale yellow without the orange tones, and its lores are gray. At close range its black body shows a grayish bloom. The net effect is that Black-Hawks appear warmer, more colorful and more contrasty.

Here's a spring bonus for Phoenixians. To see our state's wonderfully unique migratory raptors you don't have to drive to the southeastern hotspots. Look for Common Black-Hawks along Camp Creek northeast of Carefree and in the Verde Valley along the Verde River and its tributaries. The very best place is the Page Springs Fish Hatchery. Watch for Zone-tailed Hawks along Camp Creek and around Mt. Ord and Pinal Peak. The very best place is along Sycamore Creek north of Sunflower. If you're out there in July when the juveniles have left the nest, you'll see fascinatingly different variations of the parental plumages. Juvenile Common Black-Hawks look nothing like their parents. They are a rich brown above, cream with vertical black streaks below, cream-colored face broken by a chocolate stripe behind the eye. Juvenile Zone-taileds look exactly like their parents but bear large, distinctive, white breast spots. These two beautiful black hawks just delivered spring to us. Get out there now!



Adult Zone-tailed Hawk



Juvenile Zone-tailed Hawk



Adult Common Blackhawk



## FIELD TRIPS - MAR/APR/MAY

See all trip info at [www.desertriversaudubon.org](http://www.desertriversaudubon.org)

**3/8/2008 Saturday, Field Trip to Dudleyville**, led by Doug Jenness, the compiler for this area on this past Christmas Bird Count. Reservations; Charles or Marion Saffell [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net), 480 668-9393.

### **3/15/2008 Saturday, Gilbert Family Birdwalk**

Join us for our monthly free Beginning Family Birdwalks at the Riparian Preserve! Desert Rivers offers free loaner binoculars, "Bird Bingo" for young naturalists, and expert leaders to take you around the ponds and point out various species. Our display tent has books and birding items for the novice and advanced birder. Birdwalks go out about every 20 minutes from 8AM to noon. Parking is east of the library on Guadalupe at the entrance with a large boulder sign with the inscription; "Riparian Preserve." If parking lot is full, park west of it in the library parking lot.

### **3/15&16/2008 Tres Rios Nature Festival!\*\*\*\*\***

The Tres Rios Nature Festival is a two-day Nature Festival that focuses on the rich diversity of wildlife, habitat, history and culture of the Gila River drainage. This is the largest nature festival in the state, and offers rotating speakers, live animals, a petting "zoo", food, entertainment, fishing, and river tours.

Admission is free! See [www.tresriosfestival.org](http://www.tresriosfestival.org)

### **3/29/2008 Feathered Friends Festival at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve! \*\*\*\*\***

The Feathered Friends festival is organized by the Riparian Institute at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve each year to acquaint people with the great facility, and afford many environmental, governmental, and nature groups, the opportunity to share their work with the public. See [www.riparianinstitute.org](http://www.riparianinstitute.org)

**4/5/2008 Saturday, Field Trip Birds, Butterflies & Reptiles**, led by Kurt Radamaker, AZFO founder and author. Reservations; Charles & Marion Saffell, [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net); 480 668-9393.

**4/12/2008 Bald Eagle Banding Field Trip** with AZGF Dept. Date as yet unconfirmed- please check back as trip approaches for confirmation of date, time, and location. This field trip will be led by two AZGF biologists to a site north of Phoenix, possibly Camp Verde, to access nestlings and band them as part of the decades-long Eagle Nestwatch Program. Reservations will be open at the beginning of April- limit: 10. Contact Mike Rupp at [mikerupp@cox.net](mailto:mikerupp@cox.net)

**4/ ? /2008 Saturday, Seven Springs, Lower Camp Creek**, led by Joy Dingley, Education Director, Desert Rivers. Reservations; Charles or Marion Saffell [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net); 480 668-9393. Date undetermined- see website for exact date.

### **4/19/2008 Gilbert Family Birdwalk**

See earlier write-up. No reservations required.

**4/20/2008 Sunday, Page Springs**, led by Tice Supplee, Bird Conservation Director, Audubon Arizona. Reservations; Charles & Marion Saffell, [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net); 480 668-9393.

**4/26/2008 Pinal Mountains Field Trip** led by David Pearson, PhD Sat. 26 Apr. 2008 We will meet in the S.E. corner parking lot of the Tempe Library (Southern and Rural) and leave there by 4:45 A.M. sharp (sunrise will be at 5:45 A.M.). Please plan to car pool so we take only 4 cars. (15 participants maximum). In past years, we have seen/heard between 70 and 80 species on this trip. For Reservations; contact Charles or Marion Saffell at [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net) or (480) 668-9393.

### **5/3/2008 May 3-4 Field Trip to Southwest Arizona**

**Research Station, Portal, AZ**, led by Krys Hammers This birding field trip to the American Museum of Natural History's Southwestern Research Station will be a two day trip, trip number is limited to 10. We will leave on Saturday, May 3rd and bird at Whitewater Draw on the way to Douglas. We'll stay

at the Motel 6 in Douglas (\$51.73/double occupancy) on Saturday night. We meet professional guide, Dave Jasper in Portal early Sunday morning. The guide fees will be \$30 per person. We'll stay at the Portal Peak Lodge (\$90.14/ double occupancy) on Sunday night. Sunday we'll return to the top spots and stop at Wilcox Playa on the way home. We will try for at least 100 species on this trip. Contact Krys Hammers to make reservations - 480-413-9805, [krys.hammers@cox.net](mailto:krys.hammers@cox.net)  
**5/10/2008 Hassayampa Preserve**, led by Mike Rigney, Vice-President, Desert Rivers. We'll explore riparian and desert habitats at this Nature Conservancy preserve. Reservations Charles & Marion Saffell, [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net); 480 668-9393.  
**5/17/2008 Madera Canyon Field Trip** - led by Pierre Deviche, ornithologists from ASU. Since we'll be heading South to Madera Canyon, we will meet at the Safeway Parking Lot that is located at the SE intersection of Chandler Ave. and 40th St. in Ahwatukee. We will depart this meeting area promptly at 5:30 a.m. Participants should definitely bring water and food as I expect that we'll be out there most of the day with return to Phoenix by mid-afternoon or so. Limit 10. Reservations before May 15; Charles or Marion Saffell, 480 668-9393; or, email; [marisaff@cox.net](mailto:marisaff@cox.net)

## A POST FROM THE LISTSERV

In my fifteen years of birding here, plus two vacations prior to that, I have learned that stating your birding goal for the day as "trying to find Montezuma Quail" is akin to randomly burning 15 gallons of gas at \$3.00 per gallon for no apparent reason, letting your friends or anyone else that listens to you utter such a statement wondering whether a gift card for drive-through psychiatric help is in order or best yet, hitting yourself in the forehead with a brick. Yet, I uttered such a statement today on behalf of friends Rae Jean Schlingen and Elizabeth Hess who have had this gaping hole in their life list for a few years. Our karma-draining trek supporting primarily middle eastern oil producing nations and drug manufacturing companies for migraine remedies took us along the Ruby Road to Pena Blanca Lake, from Nogales to Patagonia, through Harshaw Canyon with a connector trip across the San Rafael Valley and back through the Canelo Hills to Sonoita. It was a total of 312 miles from beginning to end. In a fit of pity from some deity, we managed to find a female MONTEZUMA QUAIL perched atop a rock alongside the road approximately 1 mile west of Canelo Hills Cienega. A quick stop and backup told us that there were more in the nearby grass and an attempt to see them better led to an explosion of 15-20 quail in all directions. There was at least 1 male-plumaged bird. So, if you decide to try for the subject bird, I still have the gift card for drive-through psychiatric help and a complimentary brick but it is a good time of year and sufficient time in appropriate habitat may lead to some more deity pity. We felt very fortunate.

Clifford Cathers, Vail, AZ



Montezuma Quail  
Photo: Cliff Cathers

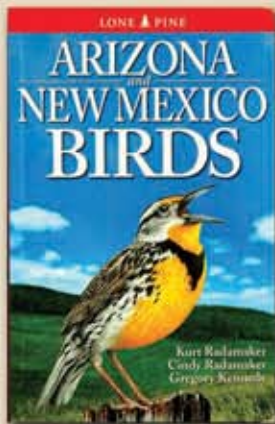
Montezuma Quail are one of six North American quail species. They are uncommon, secretive, and local in grassy undergrowth of open juniper-oak woodlands on semiarid slopes.

You can join the listserv by sending an email to: [listserv@listserv.arizona.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.arizona.edu) Do not enter a subject. In the message area, enter-subscribe birdwg05 your name



The chapter maintains a fairly extensive selection of books on birds and birdwatching, conservation, children's books, field guides, and a few selected nature items. These are always available for purchase at our book table at our monthly meetings, the Gilbert Birdwalks, and special events. Your purchase of items from our book table helps support the chapter and is very much appreciated.

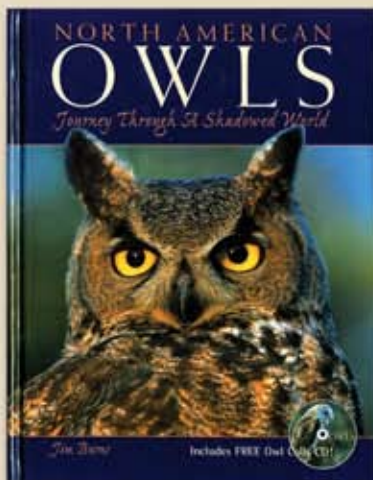
Whether you are just beginning to take an interest in birds or have already learned to identify many species, this field guide has something for you. The author's have selected 145 of the state's most common and noteworthy birds. Some live in specialized habitats, but most are common species that you have a good chance of encountering. The book contains range maps, birding locations, and species accounts that include ID, size, status, habitat, nesting, feeding, similar species, and best sites in both states.



#### Arizona and New Mexico Birds

Kurt Rademaker  
Cindy Rademaker  
Gregory Kennedy  
Lone Pine Publishing  
ISBN  
13-978-976-8200-28-0  
\$16.00 order at  
[krys.hammers@cox.net](mailto:krys.hammers@cox.net)

## AUDUBON BOOK TABLE



#### North American Owls - Journey Through A Shadowed World

Jim Burns, Willow Creek Press  
ISBN 1-57223-682-5  
\$40.00 - order at  
[krys.hammers@cox.net](mailto:krys.hammers@cox.net)

There are 19 species of owls in North America and a spectacularly illustrated chapter is devoted to each in this intriguing natural history narrative. Author Jim Burns takes the reader on a journey of discovering owls during his travels across the United States. His two rules of owling - that owls never appear when and where they are expected, and that owls appear when and where they are least expected - set the tone for this informative and exciting excursion into the world of owls. The essays are combined with stunning color images of these elusive birds, and details on each bird's habitat, range, behaviour, breeding, nesting habits, calls, and migration are also included. And as these birds are so often heard and not seen, an audio CD is part of this complete owl package, showcasing the magnificent calls of these beautiful and mysterious birds.

Jim Burns has been photographing birds for over 20 years. Widely known in the birding world, he has been published in *Birder's World*, *Birding*, field guides, and two Audubon chapter newsletters.

## DONORS AND GIFTS

Our deep appreciation goes to the following donors who have given to support a program or overall operating costs of the Desert Rivers Audubon Society from December to February, 2008.

**Arizona Medical Network Board of Directors** \$3000  
President - Dr. Charles Saffell

**Salt River Project** - donated printing of the Audubon at Home color brochure for all the chapters, and 300 CF bulbs, in support of the Audubon at Home program.

**Whole Foods Corporation** - for donation of cloth shopping bags for the Audubon at Home program.

**Fresh & Easy Store # 1045** for donation of \$1000 to the chapter. Store location is 3232 E. Guadalupe Rd, Gilbert

#### Additional Founding Members

Mike & Kathleen Evans & Family, Joyce Goodman, Marcee Sherrill, Cindy West, Linda Long (omitted earlier in error)

#### Special Thanks-members giving \$100+ end of year gifts

Sarah & Clark Porter, Millie Bilotta, Dr Marv Rallison, Carl Matthusen, Peter & Judy Allard, Mike Rigney

**Bass Pro Shops** for donation of meeting space

## NORTHWEST EARTH INSTITUTE COURSES

Desert Rivers Audubon is pleased to offer courses from NWEI to members and non-members. The Northwest Earth Institute is recognized as a national leader in the development of courses that empower individuals and organizations to protect ecological systems. NWEI courses encourage participants to explore their values, attitudes, and actions through discussion with other people. The courses are organized around three key principles:

- *An earth-centered ethic promoting individual responsibility for the Earth.*
- *The practice of engaged simplicity to enrich life and reduce personal impact on the Earth.*
- *A dedication to living fully in place and protecting the unique bioregion in which you live.*

Courses to be offered include: *Voluntary Simplicity, Choices for Sustainable Living, Exploring Deep Ecology, Discovering a Sense of Place, Globalization and It's Critics, Healthy Children-Healthy Planet, and Global Warming: Changing CO urse.*

Contact Mike Rupp at [mikerupp@cox.net](mailto:mikerupp@cox.net) and see our website to get more information on course offerings, meeting dates and times, and to register. Courses run throughout the year. Each course costs \$20 per couple, and meets weekly, for 4-8 weeks. ([www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org))



# The Family Album

Family : Podicipedidae



## Silvery Grebe

While visiting the Falkland Islands, I was able to immediately recognize this bird as a Grebe from the fluffy tail coverts and similar facial patterns to the Eared Grebe's breeding plumage. In this photo you can also see that the legs set very far back on the body, as are all Grebes. Like Loons but unlike Ducks, Grebes carry their very young chicks on the back for the first several days of life.

You're in the field and see a bird you don't recognize. You carefully note all the field marks you can, then pick up your field guide to search for the mystery bird. But where do you start, with the hundreds of pages and choices? Field guides are arranged in an order that groups families, birds that are physically and genetically similar, together. Experienced birders know that if they can identify the family, they can more quickly turn to the correct section and narrow their search. Since many families have members in other regions of the country or the world, knowing local families will often help you even in far away places. This photo essay series will feature a different family each issue, and will discuss characteristics of the family that help separate it from others. Our first installment looks at Grebes, diving waterbirds that are visually similar to Loons and Diving Ducks but are found in a completely different section of field guides than Ducks. There are 7 North American Species, and at least one can be found in any state. The 22 worldwide species are distributed through all regions except Antarctica.

## Eared Grebe

Like Loons, many (but not all) Grebes have red eyes. The neck is very thin compared to the head, where on Loons the neck is substantially thicker and more proportionate with the head. Diving ducks, except Mergansers, have much shorter necks and bigger heads than either Loons or Grebes.

## Pied-billed Grebe

One feature that distinctly distinguishes Grebes from Loons or Diving Ducks is the tail. Grebes have a small tail that is hidden among fluffy tail coverts. Loons and Ducks all have visible tails, although sometimes they can be partly submerged, but they do not have the fluffy coverts of a Grebe.



Eared Grebe



Pied-billed Grebe

## FEDERAL WATER LAWS

continued from pg 1

Advocating for clean water takes a little more time and effort but is a necessary component of water conservation. Currently, the 111th Congress has H.R. 2421 and S.1870 before it. These bills are designed to restore the protective aspects of earlier clean water law that has been eroded away during the past seven years. Contact your congressman and senators and ask them to support these important water protections. Track local measures that affect your water supply. Some of these are water recharge projects, trans-basin water transfers, unsustainable development practices and source and non-point source water pollution issues. The single most effective way to learn about current issues concerning our water resource is to maintain your relationship with Audubon. You can take comfort knowing that The Audubon Society places plentiful, clean water among its highest priorities.

*"Rising oil prices have focused the world's attention on the depletion of oil reserves. But the depletion of underground water resources from overpumping is a far more serious issue."*

— Lester Brown, author of *Plan B*, v3.0

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



**Don Farmer**, board president of the Arizona Heritage Alliance, and Conservation Director for Desert Rivers Audubon, received an Award of Excellence from the Arizona Game and Fish Commission at its annual banquet on January 19,

2008. Each year the Commission recognizes outstanding Arizonans that have contributed significantly to the welfare of Arizona's wildlife and the mission of the Arizona Game and Fish Department. The Arizona Heritage Alliance, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, was created in 1992 to protect Arizona's Heritage Fund and its objectives. In the picture above, Don visits with Kathryn "Sam" Campana at the awards banquet.

An **International Migratory Bird Day Celebration** hosted by Audubon Arizona, the City of Phoenix and the Arizona Game and Fish Department is scheduled for April 12 at the Rio Salado Habitat Restoration Area from 8 am to noon and will include bird walks, presentations, a super fun kid's zone, bird banding and photography demos and an exciting free flying raptor presentation with Liberty Wildlife. The site is on the northeast corner of the Salt River and Central Avenue- enter at the Rio Salado sign.



## JUNIOR CORNER COMPETITION

*The north wind doth blow,  
And we shall have snow,  
And what will poor robin do then,  
Poor thing?*

*He'll sit in a barn  
And keep himself warm  
And hide his head under his wing,  
Poor thing!*

You have probably heard this old nursery rhyme about the robin coping with the cold. Our valley birds don't have much of a problem with snow but have you ever thought about how they cope with the heat of our summers? Well that's the competition, let us know what you think the birds do to keep cool.

For those 7 years and younger you can draw a picture and for the 8 to 13 year olds write a short rhyme. You can write or draw about what you have seen birds doing or perhaps you can let your imagination go and come up with some funny ideas. Maybe the Cactus Wren drinks sodas while floating in a swimming pool. Does the Gambel's Quail have trouble wearing a sun hat because of his plume? Does the Gila Woodpecker try out for a job pecking ice statues?

Whether your entry is funny or serious it should be sent to Joy Dingley at 4813 E. Milton Drive, Cave Creek, AZ 85331. All entries should be received by May 20th, 2008. There will be a small prize for each category and the names of the winners will be published in our next newsletter.

## Word Search

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | W | A | N | R | G | N | A | T | C | A | T | C | H | E | R |
| T | S | O | R | A | K | I | N | G | L | E | T | X | B | E | R |
| A | E | C | D | P | H | H | N | P | N | S | H | R | I | K | E |
| E | S | R | T | T | O | E | E | D | X | K | E | N | W | M | S |
| N | S | A | S | O | H | P | R | D | F | L | I | C | K | E | R |
| N | E | N | G | R | O | I | P | L | B | U | N | T | I | N | G |
| S | G | E | O | N | B | M | A | R | S | H | W | R | E | N | Y |
| B | S | O | I | W | G | E | A | R | E | D | G | R | E | B | E |
| P | M | A | O | B | Y | W | I | E | C | R | O | W | L | O | L |
| I | H | C | T | S | W | E | W | N | I | U | J | F | R | R | L |
| P | E | G | A | O | E | F | G | N | C | F | R | A | O | D | O |
| I | N | C | L | A | P | P | E | R | R | A | I | L | H | H | W |
| T | B | L | U | E | B | I | R | D | E | B | D | C | E | A | L |
| L | E | C | A | R | D | I | N | A | L | T | G | O | T | W | E |
| Y | E | L | L | O | W | T | H | R | O | A | T | N | V | K | G |
| O | R | T | A | S | E | O | K | A | O | H | A | A | N | E | S |

Find the following hidden words:

snowy egret, cardinal, yellow warbler, hawk, falcon, raptor, owl, swan, crane, moorhen, eared grebe, kinglet, inca dove, pipit, yellowthroat, marsh wren, phainopepla, gnatcatcher, yellowlegs, sora, clapper rail, kite, bunting, bluebird, cowbird, crow, curlew, flicker, goose, shrike

## KIDS PAGE

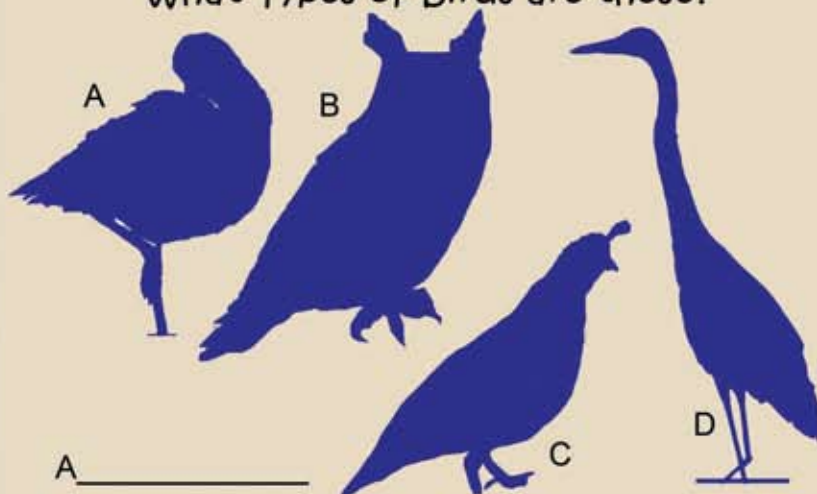
Calling All Nature Artists!



Send in your best nature drawing! Each issue we will publish a few drawings from different age groups and award a prize to all that are published!! Mail your drawings to : Mike Rupp, 1048 E Tuckey Lane, Phoenix, AZ 85014 Please include your name, age, and address!

## Silhouette Quiz

What Types of Birds are these?



A. \_\_\_\_\_  
B. \_\_\_\_\_  
C. \_\_\_\_\_  
D. \_\_\_\_\_

ANSWERS: A-Still B-Owl C-Quail D-Egret



## MONTHLY MEETINGS

Desert Rivers Audubon Society meetings are held every second Monday of the month at the Southeast Regional Library (Gilbert Library) at 7PM in the auditorium, September through April. The library is at the southeast corner of Greenfield and Guadalupe Roads in Gilbert. All are welcome. See website under "Events" for list of speakers and topics. Doors open at 6:30 PM.

## GILBERT FAMILY BIRDWALKS

The Gilbert Family Birdwalks are held every third Saturday of the month from October to April, at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve, located on the SE corner of Guadalupe and Greenfield Roads, in Gilbert. (East of library) Walks run from 8AM to noon, and depart every few minutes. We provide loaner binoculars, expert leaders, childrens and adult books, and there is no charge.

## BIRD LISTSERV - RARE BIRD ALERT

Bird alert information for rare Arizona and New Mexico birds can be obtained by subscribing to the bird listserv at the Univ. of AZ. This is the most popular method in the valley to know what rarities are in the area, and find out lots of other birding information. To subscribe, go to [listserv@listserv.arizona.edu](mailto:listserv@listserv.arizona.edu) and in the message area type: subscribe birdwg05 your name Do not put anything in the subject area.

## DESERT RIVERS BOARD MEMBERS

|                            |                 |                                                                      |
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| Conservation Director..... | Don Farmer      | <a href="mailto:huntnhabit@msn.com">huntnhabit@msn.com</a>           |
| Volunteer Director.....    | Marion Saffell  | <a href="mailto:marisaff@cox.net">marisaff@cox.net</a>               |

Desert Rivers Audubon Society  
1221 N. Terrace Road  
Chandler, AZ 85226  
602-388-4072

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

We welcome your interest in becoming a member and participant of Desert Rivers Audubon. Your membership dues help support our outreach activities. You can join National Audubon and Desert Rivers Audubon by downloading a form from our website, and receive the bi-monthly Audubon magazine. Most Audubon chapters also have a "Friends" membership which entitles you to our quarterly newsletter, and discounts.

|                                                                   |               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <i>Students / Seniors (65+) Membership .....</i>                  | <i>\$20.</i>  |
| <i>Individual Membership.....</i>                                 | <i>\$25.</i>  |
| <i>Family Membership.....</i>                                     | <i>\$40.</i>  |
| <i>Founding Membership.....</i>                                   | <i>\$100+</i> |
| <i>(not a lifetime membership,..... available until Dec.2007)</i> |               |
| <i>Corporate Membership.....</i>                                  | <i>\$300+</i> |

**What is the difference between a Desert Rivers "Friends" membership, and National Audubon membership?** National Audubon and chapters are separate entities. All dues and gifts to Desert Rivers are used for local programs. You can be a member of Desert Rivers and also be a member of National Audubon simultaneously, or become a Desert Rivers member without joining National Audubon. You can even be a member of more than one Audubon chapter at the same time, regardless of your home address. If you are a National member, you can help this chapter by designating Desert Rivers as your "assigned chapter" by contacting : [kvullis@audubon.org](mailto:kvullis@audubon.org)

**Desert Rivers Audubon Society** is a 503(c) non-profit organization incorporated in Arizona, formed to provide environmental education and conservation opportunities to valley residents and advocate for our environment. For information on planned giving or bequests to the chapter, please contact Treasurer Janice Miano at 480-946-1327

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