



DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

VOLUME 2 - SUMMER 2008 NEWSLETTER



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American Avocet feeding at Gilbert Riparian Preserve - Cindy Marple Photo

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mike Rupp

The threat to the Verde River is this issue's conservation topic, and rightly so. Though this issue has only recently garnered wide-spread public attention, its roots go way back to 1994, when the Towns of Prescott and Prescott Valley began experiencing rapid residential development, fueled by Californians and others making "equity migrations" from areas of high priced housing to what they considered beautiful, cheap property and homes in and around Prescott.

I would have thought that at that time, Arizonans had had enough history with water issues to understand that any geographic area can only sustain so much human and wildlife population - that there's a limit to how much development can take place relative to water supply. What seems like common sense to even the most naïve observer, seems to have gotten lost on developers and city officials.

In a nutshell, the level of development the towns seem willing to permit can only be realized by negatively impacting the Verde River, just as the San Pedro in southeastern Arizona has been seriously impacted by development. I would have liked to believe that we had advanced significantly in our overall stewardship of nature and wildlife since 1994 that this time around-conservation might be part of this development plan, but any close observation of the developing Verde River water brouhaha quickly exposes posturing, legal wrangling, differing research and opinions, and a division into separate camps.

Without a law in place that sets some sort of limit on development relative to water availability, these water issues will never cease. Development is inevitable, but does it have to be at the expense of "nature"? There must be a way that towns such as Prescott, Prescott Valley, Dewey, Humboldt, and Mayer can develop under a reasonable plan that insures the sustainability of our water supplies and rivers. Our riparian corridors are much too rare, beautiful, and important to all the resident and migrant species of birds and other wildlife that depend upon them to allow them to be negatively impacted by uncontrolled ground-water extraction and pipelining the water directly to the cities.

I urge you to acquaint yourself with this particular issue through our newsletter articles and other sources, and become an advocate for the Verde River. It's not too late to demand that environmental impacts be assessed, development proceed only in as much as the river isn't damaged, and a strict, unchangeable limit on water usage be imposed, *irregardless of continued immigration into the area*. You can help have an impact personally by taking some of the recommended actions in the newsletter article by our conservation director, Don Farmer. Many councilpersons and supervisors are aware of the probable impacts to the Verde River- let's dialogue with them and make our voices heard, hopefully to arrive at a consensus about protecting the beautiful Verde River.

"A society is defined not only by what it creates, but by what it refuses to destroy."

— John Sawhill, former president/CEO of
The Nature Conservancy

AUDUBON AT HOME

Krys Hammers

Fuel Efficiency

We have become so dependent on our cars in the Phoenix area, as in most US cities. Yet this overuse of fossil fuels pollutes our air, threatens the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other drilling sites, and keeps us dependent on foreign oil-producing countries. Still our cars offer us the freedom to come and go as we please. How can we reconcile negative impacts of our use of fossil fuels with our freedom? Here are a few suggestions to become more fuel-efficient.

Hybrid cars may not be the best fit for everyone, but we can support the technology with our pocketbooks by investing in a hybrid. I think it is the technology of the future, but it needs to continue to be refined. Additionally, the more we support the technology, the more widespread and the cheaper these cars will become. Smart Cars or even smaller cars are also a good choice. If you drive 15,000 miles a year, the difference between getting 30 MPG and 20 MPG at \$3.50 per gallon of gas will equate to \$875.

Most of us spend many hours in traffic during our commute to work each week. Try carpooling. Not only will you save half of your fuel bill and wear and tear on your car, but also you'll have someone to talk to during those lost hours. You'll be able to use the HOV lane and some companies provide preferential parking for carpoolers. Even 2 or 3 days a week will result in a great savings. Ask your employer to start a carpool program if they don't already have one. Maybe they can team you with someone who lives near you and shares your schedule.

The biggest drain on gas mileage is starting and stopping. Avoid the jackrabbit starts and racing up to stop lights. According to EarthEasy.com, "In city driving, nearly 50% of the energy needed to power your car goes to acceleration." This was a hard concept for me to wrap my mind around. I've always had an Indy 500 mentality. I always wanted to be the first one off the line and the guy in front of me was always going too slowly. I now have a car that shows fuel consumption in real time and I can see how high that gauge goes when I engage in that behavior. Now when I see a red light up ahead I take my foot off the accelerator and start coasting, hoping that the light will turn and I won't have to stop at all.

Keep your car in good shape. Changing your Air Filters regularly can result in a 10% savings in fuel economy. One of the most important things is keeping your tires properly inflated. If your tires are under-inflated, it can cost you up to 6% more in fuel. The pressure printed on the side of your tire is the Maximum operating pressure and not necessarily the optimum tire pressure. Check your owner's manual for the optimum pressure. You can get a good, easy-to-use digital tire pressure gauge at any auto parts store. Regularly check your tires before you drive your car.

You have to find the right balance for yourself. You can check for more simple tips to reduce your fuel consumption at www.fueleconomy.gov. Please drive safely and efficiently, and check out the Audubon at Home web page on the Desert Rivers website for additional "green living" information.



THE LAST VERDIN?

by Tice Supplee, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Arizona

All Photos :Cindy Marple

A National Audubon Society study released in the summer of 2007 reveals that local and national threats are combining to take a toll on birds, habitats, and the environment across the country. Population declines for some common Arizona birds echo the study's disturbing findings. These are not rare or exotic birds we're talking about- they're birds that we can find in our own yards or on a hike in the desert. Declining numbers in our common birds is an early warning of changes in our environment.

Arizona's birds provide an important piece of our state's unique charm for residents and tourists alike. Even more important, the health of our common species may indicate serious environmental problems that may eventually affect humans.

The Black-throated Sparrow

requires the openness of native desert habitats and has declined in Arizona due to development and urban sprawl. While still present in natural habitat preserves, it has disappeared from developed parks and residential areas. Protecting desert habitats, preventing hot wildfires, and discouraging invasive plant species will help reverse declines in these handsome sparrows. Decline since 1967 : 63%

The **Loggerhead Shrike** has declined in parts of Arizona due to habitat loss. The Loggerhead Shrike declines are similar to that of other grassland and farmland species. Development of farmlands and grasslands pose the greatest threat to this species in Arizona. Rate of decline since 1967 : 73%

The **Phainopepla** has declined due to drought and urban sprawl and is not found in cleared agricultural areas or open, treeless lands. This bird prefers areas of mistletoe infested trees : it eats the berries and nests in the dense branches of the mistletoe. Rate of decline since 1967 : 64%



Black-throated Sparrow



Loggerhead Shrike



Phainopepla

The National Audubon Society study combined data from two popular citizen science bird projects : Audubon's Christmas Bird Counts and the U.S. Geological Survey's Breeding Bird Survey. "Tens of thousands of [volunteer] citizens have given us information that no researcher or group could possibly gather without them" said Paul Green, executive director of Tucson Audubon.

In Arizona, the Common Nighthawk, Loggerhead Shrike, Black-throated Sparrow, Verdin, and Phainopepla are of most concern, with declines during their breeding seasons ranging between 93% and 64% in the last forty years. Observers are less likely to report these interesting and unique species today than they were forty years ago. What will the next forty years bring?



(Lesser Nighthawk shown)

The **Verdin** shows population declines in southern Arizona due to habitat loss and urbanization. Verdins can nest in developed areas, if sufficient native vegetation is present. They feed on small insects and nectar. Rate of decline since 1967 : 65%

The **Common Nighthawk** has become conspicuously absent from northern Arizona in the last ten years. This night-active insectivore is migratory and may be encountering difficulties on it's wintering grounds. The decline in this species indicates that a partnership must be established with our southern neighbors. Rate of decline since 1967 : 93%

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Protect local habitat - Join local Audubon chapters to protect and restore habitats close to home. Audubon's Important Bird Areas program offers opportunities to save critical bird habitats. Learn more at www.audubon.org/bird/iba/index.html

Support Sustainable Forests - The Ponderosa Pine and mixed conifer forests in our southeastern "Sky Islands" provide essential breeding territory for many birds. Laws that promote sustainable forest management will help prevent habitat loss.

Protect Wetlands - Support for local, state, and federal wetlands conservation programs is essential to protect a wide array of species. See www.audubon.org/campaign/cleanwater2

Save Grasslands - Increase the amount of habitat that can

support breeding grassland birds. Support smart growth and protection of open space.

Fight Climate Change - Individual energy conservation along with strong federal, state, and local legislation to cap greenhouse emissions can help to curb the worst consequences. See www.audubon.org/globalwarming/

Maintain Ranchlands - Support wildlife-friendly management of lands by the BLM and other agencies. Support good regulations for grazing, fire, mining, and energy development.

Preserve Farmlands - Promote strong conservation provisions in the federal farm bill, especially the Conservation Reserve Program, which pays farmers to keep marginal farmlands idle and supports millions of acres of good bird habitat.

DEVELOPMENT & THE VERDE RIVER

Don Farmer, Conservation Director
Photos : Mike Rupp

When DRAS President, Mike Rupp asked me to pen an article on the Verde River and its future condition for this newsletter edition, I thought I had an easy assignment; after all, so much has been written these past few years concerning the plight of this and other Arizona rivers. As it turns out however, my life-long relationship with the Verde, its tributaries and watersheds is cause for more of a personal and selfish outlook and one that could not be termed a completely objective point of view. With this bias honestly disposed of, let's take a look at some of the issues that surround this desert southwest ribbon of life that slices through central Arizona.

The Verde headwaters form at Sullivan Lake in Yavapai County. The Big Chino Valley Aquifer is fed by Big Chino Wash, Williamson Valley Wash and just downstream Granite Creek enters in after draining the northwestern edge of the Bradshaw range. The Verde flows in a mostly southerly direction for 175 miles before its confluence into the Salt River just northeast of Phoenix.

The reach of river from Sullivan Lake down to the point where the first Sycamore Creek (there are three different ones) enters the river on the left (looking downstream) is a gentle stream nestled into a canyon the river has carved out over the millennia. The riverbed gradient is slight here and the riverbanks soak in and store water thus providing a lush riparian growth from canyon wall to wall. The normal river base flow in this reach of river averages 26 cubic feet per second (CFS) and could be more adequately described as a creek. The river does flash here due mostly to heavy seasonal rains that swell normally dry washes in the upstream watersheds. Most of the Upper Verde region snowmelt that would account for higher springtime flows is generally held by reservoirs for agricultural use in the upstream tributaries and does not reach the river. Necessary to maintain the ecological health of the Verde, this seasonal fluctuation of flow between base and flood stage maintains a natural diversity and balance that establishes the thriving ecosystem found here. Indeed, the native flora and fauna have evolved in ways that take advantage of this constant state of change. Our Verde River is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the Americas and maintaining the water in the river is the most important key into this magical place.

As water flows down a river, there are always people who want to divert that water for other uses. The Verde is no exception and it's flow has a lot of pressure to tap into it. The upstream communities, developers, and wildcat sub-dividers are drilling into the Big Chino aquifer at a staggering pace. The cities of Prescott, Prescott Valley, and late-comer Chino Valley have plans on the table to pipe the Verde aquifer water over the hill and into their own communities. That unregulated tapping of groundwater at the headwaters threatens the Verde River base flow and that has the many downstream surface water

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*Bald Eagle nestlings on the cliffs of
the Verde River near Camp Verde*

rights holders screaming foul. Caught in the middle of this squabble over how to divvy up all the water is the concept of a wild and free-flowing river.

A stakeholders group has formed to protect the interest of the upstream water users. The Upper Verde River Watershed Protection Coalition, better known simply as the "coalition" is made up of the cities and towns, developers, tribes, elected officials and other water users. A visit to their website at www.uvrwpc.org will sum up their intentions rather quickly. Right up front and center the group states their mission as, "...protection of base flow of the Verde River to the maximum possible extent and achieving safe yield within the Prescott Active Management Area (AMA)". The wiggle in those words are proven when coalition member and Yavapai County Supervisor Carol Springer indicates that she totally supports maintaining base flows into the Middle Verde Valley and that the proposed tapping into the Big Chino will not reduce those flows more than 5-10%. Let us uncloak her rhetoric and look at what she is truly saying. The Middle Verde, Clarkdale down through Camp Verde, maintains a base flow that averages 70CFS prior to irrigation diversions. If we remove 10% or 7CFS from the Middle Verde flow, that same 7CFS now gone from the Upper Verde base flow represents a whopping 35% reduction in base flow there. Further compounding this political wiggle is the presence of sound hydrological studies proving the water extractions from the Big Chino as proposed by the pipeline advocates will result in an even greater base flow loss from the Upper Verde. Members of the "coalition" or "coalition to protect the pipeline" as it is more commonly referred to by local enviro types, has also played a hand in a focused piece of AMA-exemption legislation that is providing them the opportunity to access the Big Chino aquifer. This is special interest activity at its worst and the Verde River is the big loser.

The Verde has supporters, one friend is The Citizens Water Advocacy Group (CWAG), a non-profit organization formed to protect the Verde flow. They state the problem simply as, "a water crisis looms for the incorporated communities of Prescott, Chino Valley, and Prescott Valley—the so called Tri-Cities—and the unincorporated areas within the upper Verde watershed. This crisis stems from exploding population growth and inadequate regulation of ground water use". The group was formed 5 years back and has been working for a safe-yield on the Big Chino aquifer that ensures an adequate base flow on the upper Verde. www.cwagaz.org

One issue that drives resource conservation advocates crazy is how the political machines ignore meaningful conservation efforts in favor of fueling their local economies by means of unbridled growth. In a phone conversation with Carol Springer, the Yavapai County Commissioner, I asked her about her thoughts regarding the topic. She quickly pointed out that all future master-planned communities from the Tri-City area and even extending into the Dewey/Humboldt area will be designed with extravagant water conserving measures such as low-flow appliances and sewage systems that recharge into the aquifer for future use. When I asked her about providing tax incentives for meaningful water conservation efforts installed by existing water users, the wildcat subdivisions and small developers, she provided no comment. Supervisor Springer was incredulous when asked how she viewed the animosity over Verde River water between the Tri-Cities and the downstream communities.

"This crisis stems from exploding population growth and inadequate regulation of ground water use".
- the Citizen's Water Advocacy Group

It is a fact of life the downstream user historically resents upstream use" as she jabbed the downstream users eye. "We have no surface water rights up here and we maintain the right to use the groundwater to sustain our livelihood", "[They] have ALL the surface water rights, why are they complaining?", as she took another shot at the downstream folks. She spoke of the Salt River Projects threat to sue if the Tri-Cities start constructing the proposed trans-basin pipeline. Referring to this past seasons wet winter, she accusingly said, "I find it hard to believe how they (SRP) can say we cannot use the groundwater here when just this past spring, they allowed more water to flow uncollected down river than we would use in a year". She spoke these words like she could stop the rains when they came and I supposed she was, as some others are, advocating the construction of new dams on the Verde.

One of the river issues that may seem unrelated, on the surface at least, is the status of the Desert Nesting Bald Eagle (DNBE). The recent and outstanding courtroom victory that re-instated Threatened Status to the DNBE requires the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) maintain critical habitat to ensure the survival of the species. Robin Silver, Co-Founder and Board member of the Center for Biological Diversity and the architect of the lawsuit to maintain the DNBEs Threatened Status makes the case that, "eight DNBE territories would be negatively impacted with the dewatering of the Upper Verde. Furthermore, a continued listing affords the Upper Verde increased protection because it is critical for DNBE survival". Any federal activity that would alter the DNBE's habitat would have to be evaluated through public process. Pipeline permitting by the United States Army Corp of Engineers is an example of how the DNBE ruling might affect Verde water diversion.

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Map courtesy of the Center for Biological Diversity

Birds of the Verde River

From Beasley Flats up in Camp Verde, down to the confluence with the Salt River in the northeast valley and all points in between, the Verde River is truly an amazing riparian habitat that supports upwards of 200 resident and migratory bird species, in addition to several endangered fish and the River Otter. Pictured below are but a very few of the shorebirds, warblers, ducks, and waders that live on or near the river. Not shown are the **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**, the **Southwestern Willow Flycatcher**, and our local **Bald Eagle**, all of which are on the endangered or threatened species list, and depend upon this riparian habitat for survival.

A photo collection by Cindy Marple on the resident and migrant bird species that depend upon the Verde River



Yellow Warbler



Black Phoebe



Orange-crowned Warbler



Song Sparrow



Killdeer



Black-crowned Night Heron



Yellow-rumped Warbler



Belted Kingfisher



Black-throated Sparrow



American Avocet



Blue-winged Teal



Green-winged Teal



White-faced Ibis



Lucy's Warbler



Lazuli Bunting



Violet-green Swallow



Neotropic Cormorant



Western Tanager



Pied-billed Grebe



Yellow-headed Blackbird



Northern Cardinal



Spotted Sandpiper



FIELD TRIPS - JUN/JUL/AUG

See all trip info at www.desertriversaudubon.org

Field Trips slow down during the hot summer months, but there are some good trips available. Please see the Desert Rivers' website for trip listings, and watch for the new field trips schedule posting for September 2008- April 2009.

VERDE RIVER WATER AND SRP

Greg Komrumpf, Principal Analyst, Salt River Project

Protecting the Verde River

In a normal year, about 40% of SRP's surface water supply comes from the Verde River. Every drop from the Verde is critical. That's why SRP is tuned in to water issues on the Verde watershed, especially issues related to the potential increased pumping near the Verde headwaters. Large scale pumping can significantly impact the river's flow and our ability to deliver water to our shareholders. Although SRP continues to challenge groundwater pumping plans that may threaten SRP water supplies, we support efforts to identify alternate sources of water to meet the increased water demands in Yavapai County. The conversion of existing agricultural water uses to meet the growing needs of municipal and industrial water users and the purchase of Colorado River water rights are two examples. Water supply decisions made today will affect current residents, as well as millions of future Arizonans. Maintaining the flow of the Verde River isn't just about SRP's service territory - it's important to the vitality of the habitat and economy on the Verde Watershed.

NOTEWORTHY SIGHTINGS

Excerpts From the AZFO website and Listserv



Prothonotary Warbler
(*Protonotaria citrea*), Gilbert
Riparian Presv. Maricopa County.
This Prothonotary Warbler was
discovered and photographed by
Brendon Grice on 09 May
2008. Prothonotary Warbler is

a rare transient in Arizona but occurs annually. Prothonotary is a large, brightly colored, slow moving warbler. It has a long black bill, completely orange-yellow head, beady black eye, blue gray wings and white undertail coverts. In flight the large white tail spots on the short tail are conspicuous. This bird is probably a female because of the green on the top of the head and because the head is not the intense orange of the male. Both sexes however are very brightly colored.

Least Tern is a rare spring migrant in SE AZ. Prior to the 1990s it was casual in Arizona. Now multiple birds are typically seen each spring from late April through June with Willcox being one of the favored locations. It's not clear where the Least Terns that migrate through AZ are heading to nest.



Tue, 6 May 2008 The **Tufted Flycatcher** was relocated this morning, perhaps first by Rick Taylor and group, and was intermittently present from 6:30 to at least 8:30 a.m., today, Tuesday, in Cave Creek Canyon at Herb Martyr Campground. Apparently the bird was first found yesterday by Rick and Matthew Johnson from Sacramento, who showed photographs to P.D. Hulce, who relocated it and got the news out. - Richard Webster

ARIZONA FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS *Troy Corman*

The Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) organization has been in existence for about three years. Although there are many routes that AZFO will take as more individuals get involved, the primary focus is on obtaining, compiling, and disseminating recently acquired information on the birds of Arizona. In fact, the organization's mission statement is as follows: "Arizona Field Ornithologists is an organization of birders and ornithologists dedicated to increasing the knowledge of the identification, status, and distribution of Arizona's birdlife." Please keep in mind however, that this broad statement may change slightly as the organization evolves and future endeavors are undertaken. We provide this information economically via printable online documents and frequently updated postings on the AZFO web pages. We recently began displaying statewide seasonal reports compiled from noteworthy observations. Eventually, we plan to produce a peer-reviewed, printed publication to be called *Arizona Birds*, featuring photographs, articles, papers, and survey results of relevance to our mission. We also sponsor an annual conference in the state that includes workshops, paper presentations, and local field excursions to seldom visited areas.

For AZFO to progress, we need many active and dedicated members from throughout the state to take part in its evolution. This can be accomplished by submitting noteworthy field observations, writing articles, and participating in organized weekend bird surveys to remote or little known areas of the state. We have begun to compile information about bird distribution, numbers, migratory patterns, and breeding records throughout the state from seasonal reports submitted by birders like you. An important result of this activity will be to help establish the following information for each of Arizona's 15 counties: a complete list of documented species, a list of species that nest or have nested, early and late nesting records, and arrival and departure dates for migrant and irruptive species. Once we compile this baseline information, we can then evaluate the significance of future local reports, document changes in the seasonal status of species, and have a much better understanding of statewide bird distribution. Members can also help document and monitor the changing status of nonnative bird populations in Arizona, such as Eurasian Collared-Doves, Peach-faced Lovebirds, and Monk Parakeets. We also encourage you to participate in the annual statewide spring bird survey known as the North American Migration Count. There are more details on this event online, and you can click on the web page to view the latest result by county (<http://www.azfo.org/namc/aznamc.html>). Please come join us in our infinite quest to understand the dynamic nature of Arizona's avian world and help create an open forum to share these new revelations and discoveries.

Ed. note: You do not have to be an advanced birder or professional biologist to be a member of AZFO - every membership helps AZFO to accomplish their goals. The AZFO website has terrific information grouped into the following web pages:

Arizona Birds Online Journal, Photo Documentation Page, Birding in AZ - (locations, stories, essays), Seasonal Reports Page, County Birds Database, NAMC Page / Program, Events / Field Expeditions Page.

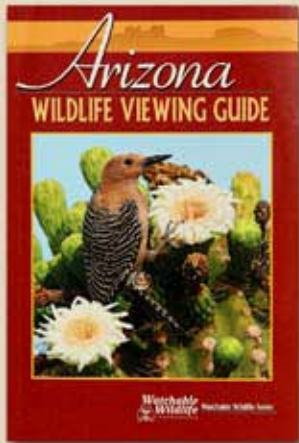
The AZFO website is : www.azfo.org

I encourage you to support this prestigious and important organization by considering membership, and participating in various opportunities for data collection. A membership form and member info is available on the AZFO website.

AUDUBON BOOK TABLE

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Canyons and cliffs, deserts and plateaus, Arizona has some of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. The habitats are unlike any others, and that means unique wildlife viewing for you! Use the Arizona Wildlife Viewing Guide on your next exploration of this wondrous state. The book is your key to some of the most alluring animals in the country. The book features detailed descriptions



Arizona Wildlife Viewing Guide

Compiled and edited by Sharen Adams & Sharon Mallman
Adventure Publications, Inc.
ISBN 1-59193-141-X
\$15.00 - order at krys.hammers@cox.net

of 128 unique sites and the wildlife you may find at each, beautiful photographs of the sites and animals, tips for your best chance to see the wildlife, a three-tiered rating system to let you know which locations are "can't miss", site features, driving directions, contact information, and more!

The cover photo and some inside photos are the work of our newsletter contributing photographer, Cindy Marple! This guide is rich in information and beautiful photography throughout the state, and is very helpful in planning day or weekend trips to some of the best birding locations in Arizona.

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MONTHLY MEETINGS

Due to scheduling problems with the City of Gilbert, the location and weekday of our regular monthly meetings are again uncertain. We will meet either on Mondays or Tuesdays, 7-9 PM, either at the Library, or at another facility within Gilbert. Please check our website for meeting info.

August is the start of fall migration in central AZ. A daylong **Beginning Birding Workshop** will be held August 24th at the Veteran's Oasis Park in Chandler and is designed for beginners who want to learn the art of birdwatching. Topics include bird identification, birding equipment and local birding opportunities. The workshop will combine classroom time with a short birdwalk around the desert and riparian habitats at Veteran's Oasis Park, located at 4050 E. Chandler Heights Rd. Loaner binoculars available. Sign up for section 3901-478 under the Leisure & Lifestyle tab at www.chandleraz.gov.

The NWEI discussion course, "**Voluntary Simplicity**" will begin in mid June, and is open for more participants. We meet at the Tempe Library and Rural Rd and Southern Ave weekly for eight weeks. Call Mike Rupp at 602-388-4072 or mikerupp@cox.net to register and get more information. Cost is \$20 per person or couple for the discussion guide.

Calling all amateur bird photographers!! Special **Summer Photography Sharing Sessions**: Share your pics with others at monthly meetings this summer to be held at Saffell's home. Come and enjoy the great pics from our members, with their input as to how they were able to capture that special shot. Beginning in June; dates will be published on the website. Contact Saffells at marisaff@cox.net; or 480-668-9393 for more info.

Recycling Aluminum Cans: Contact Charles Saffell, marisaff@cox.net or 480-668-9393 for pickup or drop off of your aluminum cans this summer. Cans are now 3 cents apiece, and have become a good revenue source for the chapter!

The new **Field Trips schedule** for September 2008 through April 2009 will be posted on the Desert River website soon, and printed in the September newsletter.

The Arizona Field Ornithologists will hold their second annual state membership meeting in Flagstaff on October 4. The meeting will be held at the forestry building on the Northern Arizona University campus. Like our meeting last year they will have several presentations from different parts of Arizona on bird distribution and recent research projects, provide updates on their activities and future plans, and hold elections for the board and officers. The following morning, Sunday, 5 October, they will have several half-day mini-Field Expeditions to less frequented locations that can be reached from the Flagstaff area, and possibly a three-quarter-day expedition to Navajo County. Attendance at the meeting will be at no cost to members. Non-members are welcome to both the Saturday sessions and Sunday mini-expeditions and will pay a \$10 admission fee, which can be deducted from their dues if they decide to join. Details on accommodations, driving directions, and other information can be seen on their website: www.azfo.org

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 March to May, 2008.

Bashas' Bashas Supermarkets

For their generous gift of \$5000 to underwrite the new Oasis Park Birdwalks program in Chandler, AZ for start up and operating costs, September - April season.

Many thanks to **Charles and Marion Saffell** for hosting the May Potluck Dinner at their home, and providing food and entertainment for the ninety people who attended.



Salt River Project for donating the printing of this issue of the DRAS newsletter through their printshop.

New Members

Jane Book	Frank Kleman
Foster & Billie Woods	Barb Walker
Patricia World	Doreen Lah
Arron Kimbel-Sannit	Patricia McAlarnen
Norma & Hugh Meier	Faulene Main
Richard Fillay	Karen Jones

The Family Album

Family : Icterus
Article and Photos: Cindy Marple



In this edition of the Family Album we look at New World Orioles. These colorful birds are visually similar to the Tanagers that reach North America, but are actually members of the Icterid family along with Blackbirds and Meadowlarks. There are about two dozen species distributed in the New World, nine of which occur with at least some regularity in North America. There is an Old World Oriole family which also consists of yellow and black birds. However, they are completely unrelated to the Icterids.

Male Orioles have relatively distinct markings. They all have some yellow to orange coloration, and even within a species can vary across this spectrum. All have some black markings, typically hoods, wings and/or tails, as well as some white, often on the wings.

Female Hooded: Female Orioles are much drabber than their flashy mates and are much more easily confused with the similarly drab female Tanagers. The best trait to look at to distinguish between the two is the bill. Orioles, like all Icterids, have very long pointed bills, where Tanagers are stubby. Altamira Orioles weave intricate hanging nests. The females do most of the building. These nests can be up to two feet long. In our area, look up among palm fronds which seem to be a favored spot for Hooded Orioles to do their nest construction.



Above: Female Hooded Oriole
Right: Altamira Oriole constructing typical hanging nest from a tree limb.
Below: Audubon's Warbler
Bottom Right: Bullock's Oriole



VERDE RIVER ARTICLE

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The need to protect the upper Verde River has long been at the forefront of efforts of Arizona's most respected land-trust group, The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Partnering with the state wildlife agency, the Arizona Game and Fish Department, TNC had negotiated the acquisition of critically important lands at the river headwaters. These once private in-holdings were recently purchased by the Arizona Game and Fish Commission from TNC and are lands now held in public trust. Funding for the acquisition was provided by the Arizona Heritage Fund and The Doris Duke Charitable Foundation. It is hoped that as other strategically located private lands become available, funding will be adequate to set them aside from the developer's blade.

We know we can do many things. Easily, we build dams to store water, we drill wells to suck water out of the ground for human use, we build pipelines to transfer water between watersheds- we have done all of these things many times. What we as a community seem to have a difficult time understanding is why we do these things and to what end. The future for the Verde River and other southwestern rivers has a few bright spots but development of the lands in those watersheds continue to dim even the best efforts to save the last remaining free-flowing streams. We are just about out of time to think and act on the concept that the best and foremost use of the water is in the river, coursing its way downstream providing for the life found there.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact officials! Volunteer! Attend local council meetings!

Please write to the mayors of Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley and demand that they develop a Habitat Conservation Plan to protect the Verde or abandon these damaging water projects. Also contact Yavapai county and ask the supervisors to support broader protections for the Big Chino Sub-basin and the Verde.

Jack Wilson, Mayor
City of Prescott
201 South Cortez Street
Prescott, AZ 86302
(928) 777-1270 phone

Karen Fann, Mayor
Town of Chino Valley
1020 W. Palomino Rd.
Chino Valley, AZ 86323
(928) 636-2646 phone

Tom Thurman, D2 Supervisor
Yavapai County
1015 Fair St.
Prescott, AZ 86305-1852
(928) 771-3200 phone
web.bos.district2@co.yavapai.az.us

Contact the Governor and state and federal legislators to request their aggressive support for Verde River protections and changes to our state water laws to recognize the connection between groundwater and surface water, protecting all of our precious rivers and springs.

Senator John McCain
5353 North 16th Street, Ste.105
Phoenix, AZ 85016
(602) 952-2410 phone
john_mccain@mccain.senate.gov

Tom O'Halleran, District 1
Senate
1700 W. Washington-RM 303A
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890
(602) 926-5584 phone
to'halleran@azleg.gov

Andy Tobin, District 1
House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington-Room 309
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890
(602) 926-5172 phone
atobin@azleg.gov

Harvey Skoog, Mayor
Town of Prescott Valley
7501 E. Civic Circle
Prescott Valley, AZ 86314
(928) 759-3100 phone

Carol Springer, D1 Supervisor
Yavapai County
1015 Fair St.
Prescott, AZ 86305-1852
(928) 771-3200 phone

Chip Davis, D3 Supervisor
Yavapai County
10 South 6th Street
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
(928) 639-8110 phone

The Honorable Janet Napolitano
Governor of Arizona
1700 West Washington
Phoenix, AZ 85007
(602) 542-4331 phone

Lucy Mason, District 1
House of Representatives
1700 W. Washington-RM 304
Phoenix, AZ 85007-2890
(602) 926-5874 phone
lmason@azleg.gov

Go to:

<http://savetheverde.org>
www.prescottaudubon.org
www.cwagAZ.org

"HOMESCHOOLERS BIRDWALK" AT THE GILBERT RIPARIAN PRESERVE

KIDS PAGE



Joy Dingley instructing about binoculars



Kids checking out a Burrowing Owl burrow

On April 9th, the Gilbert Riparian Preserve was host to a special weekday birdwalk given by DRAS members Charles Saffell, Joy Dingley, and Mike Rupp to a group of eighty homeschoolers and their parents. This large group of 2nd to 7th graders was thrilled to see about 30 bird species during the hour long walk, and learned about different bird families, binocular usage, and bird identification. This was a very good time of year to see shorebirds in near-breeding plumage, stilts and avocets pairing up, and remaining winter ducks. If you have homeschool children, or have friends who homeschool, you can take advantage of our twice a year outings at the Riparian Preserve with loaner binoculars and experienced leaders. Contact Joy Dingley to include your family or homeschool group in these exciting outdoor nature experiences.



Photo : Paul Wolterbeck

The Audubon Kid's Club, led by their leader Joy Dingley, made a trip to the Boyce Thompson Arboretum near Superior recently to enjoy the terrific habitats and add bird species to new life lists. Interesting birds seen were Yellow-breasted Chats, a Canyon Wren with nestlings, TWO Golden Eagles, a Bronzed Cowbird entering an Oriole's nest, and a Coopers Hawk feeding. Kid's Club members make periodic trips such as this, are given interesting learning assignments, and receive one-on-one instruction on a variety of topics.

Give your children an opportunity to "connect with nature" through our growing Audubon Kid's Club! Parents wishing to enroll their children in the Audubon Early Risers Kid's Club should contact Joy Dingley at : joy.dingley@cox.net, or 480-419-9804

Word Search

A K C A R D I N A L G D H E T
M W H I A U T T I R R E L H I
E A I B I S L A O I R O I E T
R H R D I I T S B M I N A R M
I T E E T N B K I R E C U O O
C H G S I E C T O R V F Q N U
A G A P A A T S W O L L A W S
N I N K L H K B I T E R N E
C N A B R C E E D A K C I H C
R W T U O D R I B G N I K F W
O D S L C O W B I R D P A H I
W H L A Z U L I B U N T I N G
U U O A J E B E O H P P U Q E
B D W W E E B E R G C O O T O
E V O D L T S S N I P E A V N



Find the following hidden words:
american crow, bittern, blackbird, bullock soriole,
cardinal, chickadee, coot, cowbird, dove, grebe,
grosbeak, hawk, hermit thrush, heron, ibis, kingbird,
lazuli bunting, nighthawk, owl, phoebe, pintail, quail,
snipe, stilt, swallow, tanager, teal, titmouse, wigeon,
wren



Congratulations to
Mary Keeton, age 8,
for winning the
Audubon Early Risers
Kid's Club Drawing
Contest!

Mary will receive a
gift at our September
meeting.

Kid's Club members
were asked to draw
pictures of a bird
species they have
encountered on one
of their birdwalks.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

IMPORTANT NOTICE ABOUT MONTHLY MEETINGS

Due to scheduling problems with the City of Gilbert, the location and weekday of our regular monthly meetings are again uncertain. We will meet either on Mondays or Tuesdays, 7-9 PM, either at the Library, or at another facility within Gilbert. Please check our website for meeting info. Doors open at 6:30 PM. Everyone is welcome!

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 and in the message area type: subscribe birdwg05 your name Do not put anything in the subject area.

DESERT RIVERS BOARD MEMBERS

President.....	Mike Rupp	mikerupp@cox.net
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Secretary.....	Jan Stamm	janst68@aol.com
Treasurer.....	Janice Miano	egret@cox.net
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Publicity Director.....	Cheryl Rexford	CherylRexford@yahoo.com
Field Trips Director.....	Charles Saffell	marisaff@cox.net
Education Director.....	Joy Dingley	joy.dingley@cox.net
Programs Director.....	C.Kirscher	antclaudia@hotmail.com
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Conservation Director.....	Don Farmer	huntnhabit@msn.com
Volunteer Director.....	Marion Saffell	marisaff@cox.net
Hospitality Chair.....	Evelyn Lewis	evinarizona@yahoo.com

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>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

Desert Rivers Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 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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