



DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

VOLUME 2 - FALL 2008 NEWSLETTER



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Trogon in southeastern Arizona - Cindy Marple Photo

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mike Rupp

Most of our readers know about Liberty Wildlife and the several ways they partner with Desert Rivers on programming, but did you know about their expansion plans for 2009 and the extensive rehabilitation facilities to be built near the Phoenix Zoo? Craig Fischer fills you in on Liberty's activities on page two.

Don Farmer, DRAS Conservation Director, has written about the Arizona State Parks system financing problem on page three.

During the last several years, you may have noticed the increase in numbers of Neotropic Cormorants in the valley and elsewhere. I certainly have. From spotting them occasionally in flocks of passing birds, to now finding flocks that have a majority of "Neo's" in them, this increase, and the identification of same has been a common discussion topic among birders. The article on pages 5 & 6 from Kurt Rademaker and Troy Corman of the Arizona Field Ornithologists should be helpful to our understanding of the expansion of Neotropic Cormorant's locally.

Next, it's on to an article about Arizona Wrens from reknown writer/photographer, Jim Burns. Jim has covered each of the Wrens that can be found at Boyce Thompson Arboretum.

Our new additional pages now allow us to cover Bird Sightings, Field Trips, and Annoucements in greater detail- please take a moment to see all the opportunities the chapter offers for field trips and volunteerism, and the rarities that have been found.

Cindy Marple's "Family Album" is on Sparrows, and will help you to separate these sometimes difficult "little brown jobs" and make better identifications.

We have included a regular feature with this issue, the "Conservation News" page, which reports on issues of on-going concern and has links to news stories and press releases on major environmental issues. The National Audubon "Action Alerts" will be copied to this page as well as coverage of local interest.

Desert Rivers started off it's "season" in September, and we have many programs and events on our calendar which will need additional volunteers. Won't you consider assisting DRAS in it's program to expand and reach many more in our community with a message of conservation education? This season promises to be one of new partnerships, more chapter members, and growth of the Kids Club. All this growth requires people and funds. Our new "Grants Team" is working on the funds- won't you consider joining a team to make each DRAS program a success? We especially need volunteers who can give of their time now and then during the week. Please contact Marion Saffell at 480-668-9393.

Children no longer learn how to read the great book of Nature from their own direct experience or how to interact creatively with the seasonal transformations of the planet. They seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes. We no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens. Wendell Berry

AUDUBON AT HOME

Reprinted from National Audubon

Backyards and other private lands provide essential habitat for many species of birds. Ensuring that birds have good sources of food, nesting sites, clear water, and protective cover becomes more important every day, as more habitat is lost to development, degradation, and fragmentation. You'll be helping more than birds. Birds are important indicators of environmental health and play a significant role in maintaining the earth's ecological balance--propagating plant life as pollinators and seed dispersers and controlling insect populations. Birds also bring beauty and enjoyment to our lives as one of the most accessible forms of wildlife. If their populations are in decline, it can mean that our natural resources are in trouble as well. What can you do? No matter where you live, there are birds that need your help. Select a few recommended species to help, depending on what kind of landscape you live in and the features of your land and surrounding properties.



Urban Areas. While there may not be many species of birds in landscapes dominated by buildings and pavement-including commercial areas, office buildings, shopping centers, parking

garages, and condos-it is possible to attract and support additional species by planting more trees and shrubs in the open places not covered by buildings or pavement.

Suburban Areas. Landscapes characterized by yards and smaller residential buildings usually include more trees, bushes, and birds. By planting more native trees and shrubs, or nest boxes, additional birds can be attracted to residential neighborhoods, neighborhood parks, school grounds and office parks with open space.



Rural Lands Areas that are mostly agricultural or rich in native habitats provide even more space and resources for birds. By planting or maintaining native vegetation, and setting up nest

boxes, these farmlands, ranchettes, small acreage properties, and large lot developments can support many birds that need our help.

For additional information, see Desert Rivers' Audubon at Home web page at www.desertriversaudubon.org The chapter also has an Audubon at Home brochure available to groups and individuals- call for copies.

National Audubon has many web pages on Audubon at Home programs and information on how you can live a "greener" life and help birds. See www.audubon.org

Cover Photo : Elegant Trogon at Madera Canyon on Mine Vault Trail. Canon 1DKM2N w/ 500-f4 lens and 1.4x Extender. Cindy Marple.

Craig Fischer, Vol. Bird Handler/Educator
Photos : Mike Rupp



Liberty Wildlife's Harris Hawk



You really can't describe the emotion when children get their first close look at a Red-tailed Hawk or a Burrowing Owl. Each year, volunteers from Liberty Wildlife see that look of awe and excitement from children hundreds of times, either in school room settings or at various programs like the monthly Desert Rivers Audubon Society birdwalks at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve.

"Many of these kids have an amazing grasp of the natural world and are keenly interested in everything that's going on around them; they really want to see and learn more," said Anne Peyton, a Liberty Wildlife volunteer for eight years and a Desert Rivers member. "At the same time, there are several children who are seeing birds for the first time and you never know when you're going to see the spark that ignites their interest."

Countless children have felt that spark over the years, reading and learning about the natural world and passing that interest along to others. Sometimes it's infectious.

"I've done programs in schools and then see the kids bring their parents out to the Riparian Preserve for the Liberty birds and the birdwalks," Peyton said. "Often we'll hear the parents say things like, 'She's been talking about the birds all week,' or 'We came here because he made us.'"

"Seeing someone make that connection – maybe even hearing how the kids and their family change the way they do things to live responsibly with the natural world – is the best part of our program."

Liberty Wildlife has been making that connection for 27 years and sometimes with lasting results. Even today, some of Liberty's education team members will hear from some young parents about the time that Bailey the Turkey Vulture (who has been visiting schools for 20 years) was in their class and what an impression he made.

Or maybe they will see Amelia the Peregrine Falcon and recall when one of her predecessors visited their class, and talk about how happy they were when they read that peregrines had been removed from the endangered species list.

LIBERTY WILDLIFE REHABILITATORS

Liberty Wildlife is excited to be reaching a new audience starting in November with monthly programs on the first Saturday of the month at the new Veterans Oasis Park in Chandler. And soon we look forward to sharing the Liberty Wildlife experience with many others when our new facility opens to the public in Papago Park. For the past three years, Liberty Wildlife and Desert Rivers Audubon have been working together to reach a new generation through the birdwalks and annual presentations at the Desert Rivers' monthly meetings at Page Park Comm Center.

The birdwalk programs are very special for us since we get the opportunity to show off some of the birds that people may actually see on the walk later on," Peyton said. "They may see a Harris's Hawk flying in the trees across the road or a peregrine on the powerlines above the south side of the ranch, then they can visit us and see the bird up close and learn more about the species and how important they are in the natural world. Sometimes we see the same people over and over each month, coming to see what birds we brought and what they can find on the birdwalks."

*Editors Note : The Desert Rivers' free monthly Birdwalks take place at the **Gilbert Riparian Preserve**, on the southeast corner of Guadalupe and Greenfield Roads in Gilbert, east of the Library, on **third Saturdays** from 8AM to noon from October through April, and the **Veteran's Oasis Park** in Chandler at 4050 E. Chandler Heights Road, also 8AM to noon, on the **first Saturdays** of each month, October through April.*

Learn more about Liberty Wildlife on their great website at: www.libertywildlife.org You can help Liberty Wildlife by giving to their capital funding campaign to build their new facility just north of the Phoenix Zoo. This facility will allow Liberty to treat many more injured birds and other wildlife, and allow visitors the opportunity to see the rehabilitation work and the rescued animals. Donations are accepted online.



Craig Fischer and Peregrine Falcon "Amelia"

AZ STATE PARKS IN TROUBLE

*Don Farmer, Conservation Director
Photo : Picacho Peak State Park*

Our Arizona State Parks are in trouble. It seems the current down economy and resulting state budget meltdown has led our elected legislature to strip out most of the State Parks funding and redirect it to more "important" needs. The direct result of this action is the drastic reduction of the services and programs our State Parks provide us. You do not have to be a State Park visitor to be impacted by this loss. The Arizona State Parks manages 27 parks and natural areas (including Boyce Thompson Arboretum and other Important Bird Areas) located around the state. They also oversee our State Trails System, manage the Outdoor-Related Grants Program, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the Off-Highway Vehicle Program. The folks at Arizona State Parks have been managing all of these lands and programs in an under-funded condition for years as the legislature chose to sweep one revenue source after another from them. Just one year ago, the situation at State Parks was dire; now with the current loss of funding, the entire agency is threatened with catastrophic collapse.

For whatever the reasons, state budget shortfalls, re-allocation of State Park funding, ignorance towards State Park values or other funding prioritization, it is indefensible that the legislature is strangling the growth and maintenance of assets within the state parks system by stripping this agency of its funding; what is next, are we going to start selling off agency assets to satisfy the state budget needs? The selling of State Park assets certainly is an outrageous notion but is it any less so than the unfunded agency shell that has been left in the wake of the last legislative session's budget process? What about next year's budget? From most all accounts, the next few budget years will not show much improvement and the existing funding streams for state parks will remain mostly empty or undependable.



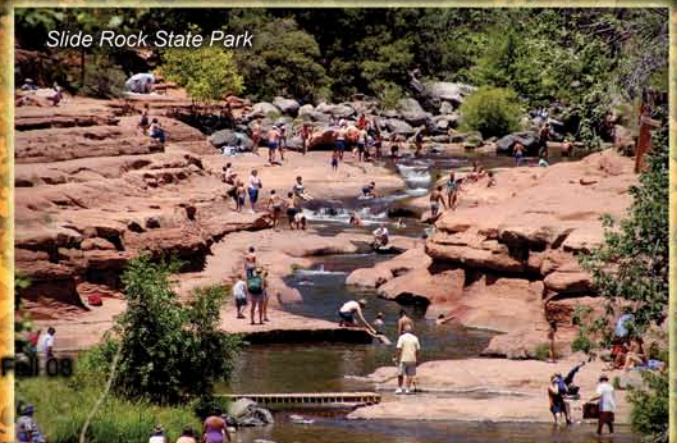
Tonto Falls

Arizona has been blessed with natural beauty and abundant natural resources and we have the luxury to visit and enjoy our State Parks most anytime we choose. If we wish to maintain this lifestyle, a new leadership vision is needed; one that will preserve the best of our natural treasures, plan for open spaces, enhance recreational opportunities and

even protect our water and air quality while planning for our future. This new vision seems a worthy goal for our State Parks system, a goal that cannot be achieved by removing that agency's acquisition and operational funding.

The Arizona State Parks agency has a solid record of operating-on-a-shoestring a statewide park system, funding for local community historic preservation efforts, and providing assistance to counties, tribal communities, cities and towns towards their own parks and recreation systems. Indeed, Arizona State Parks is the "granting" agency that allows all citizens to enjoy a higher quality of life in Arizona's communities.

The funding mechanism for Arizona State Parks is broken and we need to implement immediate changes that will ensure an adequate, dependable and increasing funding stream that provides a robust and well maintained State Parks system. Recently, the Arizona State Parks Board, the citizen commission overseers of the state parks agency, recommended to the governor the formation of a "Blue Ribbon Committee", "whose charge



Slide Rock State Park

would be to determine the present and future needs of the State Park System and explore new revenue sources". Furthermore, the commission requested the governor appoint such a committee prior to November 30, 2008 and charge the committee to report back to her prior to June 30, 2009 with recommendations for new funding strategies and a re-positioning of the agency that will secure a healthy future for the State Parks agency.

We as individuals, organizations and businesses that support and use State Park facilities and programs should urge the implementation of such a committee and charge that committee, as suggested by the Arizona State Parks Commission, as soon as possible. This citizen/governmental committee will provide answers and options to the tough policy and financial questions that currently have our state parks agency hamstrung and without many options for a healthy future.

We all share the vision of balancing smart growth with natural and cultural resource protection and the Arizona State Park system, properly funded, is the proper agency to connect the various facets of this worthy vision.

Contact: Your State Representatives and State Senator (www.azleg.gov). The Governor (www.governor.state.az.us). State Parks Board (www.azstateparks)

Conservationists hail deal for U.S. Sugar

By DIANNA SMITH and JENNIFER SORENTREUE

Palm Beach Post Staff Writers - Tuesday, June 24, 2008

The largest conservation land deal in Florida's history could provide enough acres to store 325 billion gallons of water, keeping it from being wasted out to sea. It could replenish farmland, provide wildlife habitat and virtually halt the massive water dumping that has polluted the St. Lucie River. U.S. Sugar deal It even could speed up restoration of the Everglades and cut the costs, some environmental leaders said as they celebrated the state's \$1.75 billion proposed buyout of U.S. Sugar Corp. But although supporters praised the deal, which Gov. Charlie Crist announced Tuesday in a state-owned marsh west of Wellington, others cautioned against celebrating just yet. The deal still faces significant hurdles before the sides could close the purchase on Nov. 30. The South Florida Water Management District has to hire appraisers to place a value on the property. For now, the price tag comes from studies that U.S. Sugar supplied, plus water managers' cursory estimates. The state also has to work out land swaps with other growers to provide a continuous path for water to move from the lake to the Everglades. But for now, the deal looks like a victory for Everglades activists who have dreamed for years of reconnecting the lake and the Everglades. "We have the opportunity to provide the critical missing link that represents the key to true restoration," Crist told more than 150 people, including U.S. Sugar executives, leaders of major environmental groups and news organizations from around the country. Crist compared the purchase to the creation of Yellowstone, the country's first national park. "I also want to thank God," the governor said. "We're trying to restore what he planned a long time ago." The monumental deal would give the state 187,000 acres, about the size of New York City. It also would lead to the end of U.S. Sugar, leader of an industry that has created livelihoods for so many families.

House Energy Bill Disappoints

Statement of Betsy Loyless, Audubon's Donal O'Brien Chair for Policy and Advocacy

Washington, DC, September 16, 2008 - "We are deeply disappointed with the House energy bill due for a vote today. Instead of adopting forward-looking policies that will address our long-term energy needs, Congress is intent on playing politics. "It's no secret that Americans want and need a green energy revolution that will spur energy conservation and expand clean renewable sources of power. Many of the people who will vote for today's package know this to be true. "This bill does too little to bring about America's clean energy future. When the political season is over we will urge Congress to quickly adopt measures we know will help permanently end our dependence on fossil fuels, reduce global warming pollution, and create thousands of clean energy jobs to restore America's position as an energy leader. "In the wake of a major federal energy scandal, no industry holds less public confidence, yet we stand on the verge of turning over our coasts and sensitive public lands over to their pro-drilling agenda." The bill under consideration, H.R. 6899, includes an unacceptable increase in dirty, dangerous offshore drilling that will threaten America's beaches and coastlines. Offshore drilling causes large amounts of routine pollution in the form of produced water, drilling muds, and small oil spills, but also carries the risk of less frequent very large spills that would shut down multi-billion-dollar coastal tourism economies and cause significant damage to aquatic ecosystems. While there are clean energy provisions in the bill, in Audubon's view they are simply insufficient to justify the profound new environmental risks that would be brought to America's beaches and coastal habitats. Those elements include a Renewable Electric Those elements include a Renewable Electricity Standard,

a tax extenders package that promotes renewable energy, and a transportation bill that gives Americans more environmentally-friendly transportation options. Last week, the Department of Interior Inspector General issued a series of reports documenting a culture of unethical and illegal behavior at the agency that would be responsible for overseeing the increased drilling. The charges are the subject of a Congressional hearing this week.

SRP Habitat Plan receives approval

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) accepted SRP's Horseshoe and Bartlett reservoirs habitat conservation plan (HCP). Under this plan, SRP will manage water levels at the two reservoirs to favor the habitat of endangered bird species and discourage the spread of non-native fish that threaten sensitive aquatic species. Also, SRP will acquire riverside habitat for protecting birds and contribute to the expansion of a native fish hatchery. SRP and the City of Phoenix (with a major stake in the Horseshoe reservoir) will commit between \$6.5 and \$9 million to these preservation activities. As a result of SRP's commitment to conserve native wildlife and habitat, the USFWS is permitting the loss of some individual animals that result from dam operations during the next 50 years. For more details about the HCP and the permit for reservoir operations, contact Paul.Cherrington@srpnet.com

Desert Rivers at the Arizona Science Center

Kids enjoy various activities offered by Joy Dingley, Education Director for Desert Rivers Audubon and founder of the Audubon Kids Club program.



On August 16, Desert Rivers members Joy Dingley, Charles Saffell, Leslie Vyvial, and Mike Rupp represented Desert Rivers at the fourth annual "Earth Awareness Day" at the Arizona Science Center in downtown Phoenix. Approximately 400 people stopped by to do an activity and receive information about the chapter.

Audubon report on common birds in decline echoed worldwide-

Growing Threats Include Logging, Invasive Species & Agriculture. New York, NY, September 22, 2008 - A new international report entitled State of the World's Birds reveals precipitous declines in populations of many of the world's most familiar birds, broadening the alarm first sounded in the U.S. by Audubon's 2007 Common Birds in Decline analysis. "All the world's governments have committed themselves to slowing or halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010," says the new BirdLife International report launched today at organization's World Conference in Buenos Aires; "Reluctance to commit what are often trivial sums in terms of national budgets means that this target is almost certain to be missed. The BirdLife report highlights avian losses worldwide. A staggering 45% of common European birds are declining, and on the other side of the globe, Australian wading birds have seen population losses of 81% in just quarter of a century.

NEOTROPIC CORMORANT PAPER FROM AZ FIELD ORNITHOLOGISTS

Kurt Radamaker and Troy Corman - reprinted with permission from AZFO. Photos: Brendon Grice, Jim Burns

STATUS OF NEOTROPIC CORMORANT IN ARIZONA WITH NOTES ON IDENTIFICATION AND AGEING BY KURT RADAMAKER, & TROY CORMAN

STATUS AND DISTRIBUTION

The Neotropic Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax brasilianus*) is suitably named given it is the only cormorant ranging over the entire neotropics. Although it is widespread throughout most of the western hemisphere, in the U.S. it is found primarily along the Gulf States of Texas and Louisiana, north locally to Kansas, and in south-central New Mexico. The species is sedentary throughout most of their breeding range, with wide-spread post breeding dispersal (figure 1).



Figure 1. Adult Neotropic Cormorant, Gilbert, AZ.
Photo by Brendon Grice

Neotropic Cormorant was first confirmed in Arizona in 1961 when two specimens were found shot at Arivaca Junction (Monson and Phillips 1964). By 1980, Neotropic Cormorants were considered a rare but regular straggler to lakes, ponds, and drainages in the Santa Cruz River valley north to Tucson, occasionally east to southern Cochise County (Monson and Phillips 1981). They were also found once north to the Phoenix area and a few individuals had been noted along the lower Colorado River north to Lake Havasu (Rosenberg et al. 1991). Most of these early records pertained to only one or two individuals, but observations ranged through all seasons (Corman 2005).

Since then Neotropic Cormorants have increased in southeastern Arizona and expanded north into central Arizona to northeastern Pinal County, southern Gila County and across Maricopa County west to Painted Rock Reservoir northwest of Gila Bend. The increase in population occurred gradually through the 1970s and 1980s with a rapid increase in the late 1990s and 2000s. That increase is graphically illustrated in figure 2, drawn from raw data extracted from the Christmas Bird Count (CBC) database (NAS 2008).

It should be noted that 99 percent of the numbers in figure 2 routinely come from only two Christmas Bird Counts along the lower Salt and adjacent Gila Rivers immediately southwest of Phoenix in Maricopa County. Furthermore, it was determined that high densities and diversity of wintering aquatic birds (including cormorants) were using the numerous urban lakes, ponds, and canals within the greater Phoenix metropolitan area, and that more than 95 percent of these water bodies are not included in any local CBC. The Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic was established in 2006 to collect information of water birds using these water bodies during winter. This single-day urban survey in mid-January produced a tally of 178 Neotropic Cormorants in 2006 and 191 individuals in 2007. In 2008, a high count of 1357 Neotropic Cormorants was remarkable and further supports the large population increase of this species in Maricopa County. More than 90 percent of these birds are consistently found within the city limits of Chandler, Gilbert, Phoenix, and Tempe. (<http://azfo.org/namc/indexphoenixUrban.html>).

While increasing exponentially, particularly in central Arizona, Neotropic Cormorants remain rare west to the lower Colorado River Valley (with few records for California, Patten 2001), and the first report for northeastern Baja California, Mexico, came in Dec. 2007 (Richard

Erickson, personal communication). These cormorants are casually reported north to southern Mohave and northeastern Yavapai counties. There are currently few records north of the Mogollon Rim in Arizona.

Although Neotropic Cormorants were not confirmed nesting during the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas (1993-2001), nesting was suspected (Corman 2005). The species is generally sedentary, birds were locally fairly numerous during the latter part of the atlas period in Arizona, and they were observed by atlasers in several potential nesting sites such as Gillespie and Painted Rock Dams, and also in southeastern Arizona at Patagonia Lake and Picacho Reservoir.

Indirect evidence of nesting was first discovered 10 May 2003 during the North American Migration Count when T. Corman observed a female Neotropic Cormorant guarding a small stick platform. This nest structure was near a half dozen or so active nests of Double-crested Cormorants (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) at the small Painted Rock Road/I-8 exit egret and heron colony west of Gila Bend. Corman also observed a male fly to the nest with a large stick, and after many grunts and purring gurgles from the pair, the female readily accepted the stick and placed it on the platform. It appeared they were only in the first few days of the nest building stage. A follow-up visit found the stick platform had been claimed by a lone Double-crested Cormorant.

Confirmation of breeding came in 2004 when R. Edwards informed Corman about apparent nesting activity near the Ocotillo Golf Course in Chandler, Maricopa County. Edwards lived along a nearby urban lake and for some time had been observing individual Neotropic Cormorants surfacing with water-logged sticks, then taking flight over his house and toward a nearby gated community. On 29 Feb. 2005, Edwards and Corman visited the golf course and observed 30-35 nesting pairs in four approximately 12 m (29.4 ft) high eucalyptus trees (*eucalyptus* spp.).

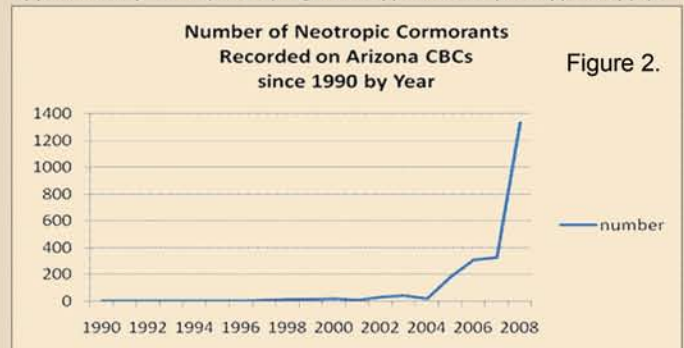


Figure 2.

The trees were in two backyards bordering the golf course and adjacent to a small artificial lake. Corman noted that there were no Double-crested Cormorants in this colony, but that 300+ Double-crested Cormorants were foraging and loafing in several urban lakes about a mile away.

In Arizona, Neotropic Cormorants prefer fresh water lakes, ponds, lagoons, and slow moving rivers containing large densities of fish with available trees, snags, islands, or open banks for loafing. In Maricopa County the species has become common to locally abundant in some urban lakes and ponds in the greater Phoenix area, as well as along perennial sections of the lower Salt and Gila rivers downstream to Gillespie Dam. Several concentration areas have already exceeded 500 individuals. The highest densities have been observed at several residential lakes in Chandler and Gilbert, just upstream of Tempe Town Lake, and several gravel extraction company lakes on the Salt and Gila Rivers. However, it should be noted that the specific concentration locations are often temporary and are based on abundant populations of appropriate size fish. Once prey populations are reduced, these highly mobile cormorants readily move to other neighborhood lakes and ponds.

EXPANSION AND CONSERVATION

The environmental factors that have influenced the exponential increase in Arizona populations of Neotropic Cormorants and stimulated their northern range expansion are unclear. More research is needed to determine the precise reasons of these changes, which are likely due to an increase in available foraging and nesting sites (Telfair and Morrison 2005). Specifically in Maricopa County, the rapid cormo-

CORMORANT PAPER CON'T.

cormorant population growth in the Phoenix area has certainly been influenced by an increase in available prey at urban ponds, canals, and man-made lakes. At least four species of exotic tropical fish (*Tilapia* spp.) have been introduced into Arizona and are frequent prey items of both Neotropic and Double-crested Cormorants. Although the practice is discouraged by the Arizona Game and Fish Department, private property owners and lake managers continue to release *Tilapia* in an effort to control the growth of certain aquatic plants (E. Swanson, personal communication). *Tilapia*s are prolific breeders and they can mature and begin reproducing at only six months of age, thus providing a plentiful supply of appropriate size prey for cormorants throughout the year. Unfortunately birds also consume other types of preys and the rapid increase of cormorants in the Phoenix area is becoming a serious challenge and financial burden to those that stock game fish into urban lakes and ponds for fishing. Recent discussions have begun that may lead to attempts at locally controlling cormorant numbers in some urban areas. Neotropic Cormorant population expansion is taking place also outside Arizona. Elsewhere in the U.S. recent breeding colonies of Neotropic Cormorant were noted in southwest Arkansas in 1996 and in southeast Oklahoma in 2001, and the number of colonies in Texas and Louisiana continues to increase, some far into the interior of these states (Telfair and Morrison 2005). In contrast, after the first New Mexico nests were discovered in the middle and lower Rio Grande River valley in 1972, these cormorants increased in numbers and breeding range into the 1990s. Since then, however, populations have significantly declined, most likely due to drought conditions that reduced lake levels and limited nesting sites, and subsequent prey base fluctuations (S. Williams and B. Howe, personal communication).

The authors suggest that the central Arizona population of Neotropic Cormorant will continue to expand. Current environmental conditions (abundance of fish, availability of roost and nesting sites, continued urbanization with little pressure from illegal shooting) provide favorable conditions for the Neotropic Cormorant. Time will tell if populations continue to expand westward along the Gila River and eventually colonize the lower Colorado River and surrounding urban areas of Yuma north to the Imperial Reservoir, where warm water and abundant preys seem readily available.

It is far less likely that this most "tropical" of the N.A. species of cormorant will permanently expand north and east across the Mogollon Rim where air and water temperatures are markedly cooler and prey less abundant than in central Arizona, especially in winter.

While it is possible that some population control programs or take permits will be granted to commercial shrimp growers, agricultural fish farms, and fish-stocking entities, it is unlikely that these limited programs would have a permanent impact on the overall population.

IDENTIFICATION

The Neotropic Cormorant often occurs with Double-crested Cormorants in Arizona and may be confused with that species. In mixed flocks, Neotropic Cormorants are obviously smaller and more slender, and have proportionately longer tails. In mixed flocks in flight, the small size, longer tail, and less prominent head of Neotropic Cormorant is obvious. Lone birds are more difficult to identify.

In adult plumage with clear views the species are readily separated by the following characteristics:

- (1) Adult Neotropic Cormorant usually has a white border to the gular pouch.
- (2) The gular pouch and facial skin of Double-crested is bright orange whereas it is usually a paler brownish-yellow on Neotropic.
- (3) The larger, more prominent orange gular pouch on Double-crested is square or rounded at the rear with the border between the bare area and the feathers extending straight down from the gape. The gular pouch in Neotropic is triangular and forms a sharp apex to the gape.
- (4) The area between the eye and the bill (supra-loral) is bright orange bare skin in Double-crested and feathered brown in Neotropic.

The identification of juveniles of both species can be challenging. These birds share many of the differences noted above for adults, especially the shape of the gular pouch and differences in the supra-loral. Juveniles of both species are lighter and browner than adults. Juvenile Neotropics are usually a fairly uniform dark brown with at most only slightly paler underparts. Juvenile Double-crested usually have light gray breasts which are sometimes paler gray on the upper breast, neck, and throat. Some juvenile Neotropics are especially challenging because they may have facial skin color that is brighter than adults (Clark 1992) and, therefore, more closely approach Double-crested. A key feature in separating these juveniles is the supra-loral which is dark feathering

in Neotropics, but is fairly bright orange-yellow or yellow-orange bare skin and uniform in color with the gular pouch in Double-crested (figures 3 & 4; Patten 1993).



Figure 3. On this juvenile Neotropic Cormorant the yellow orange gular pouch is similar in color to that of a typical Double-crested Cormorant, but note the color and feathering of the supra-loral and the dark breast. Photo by Brendon Grice.



Figure 4. On this juvenile Double-crested Cormorant note the bare skin and color of the supra-loral and the pale throat and upper breast. Photo by Jim Burns.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors thank Eric Swanson and AZ Game and Fish Dept. for status and information on *Tilapia*, Sandy Williams and Steve Howe for historical and current status of Neotropic Cormorants in New Mexico, and Michael Moore and an anonymous editor for review of the draft.

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Wren's The Best Time to Visit Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park!?

Article and Photos : Jim Burns

Back in the day, before there was a Gilbert Riparian Area (GRA), Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park (BTA) was the Valley's best birding venue. Okay, it was the Valley's only birding venue. And, though it wasn't quite in the Valley, it was close enough. It's still the best and, even with today's high gas prices, it's still close enough. BTA's higher elevation makes it delightful in summer, spring blossoms burst out all over its gardens and groves, and its autumn foliage, which peaks on Thanksgiving weekend, is unrivaled in central Arizona, but I think the very best time is winter.

In winter BTA becomes the birder's candy store: large, mixed flocks of sparrows may feature White-throated and Fox amongst all the White-crowns; a dozen Northern Flickers may be in sight at one time showing off their red tail shafts as they hang upside down gleaning the berries from the fruiting trees in the Herb Garden; or there may be an "invasion" from the mountains (Clark's Nutcracker) or the Pacific Northwest (Varied Thrush). And best of all is taking the "wren challenge."

Figured out the pun in the headline yet? For the wren challenge you need to be at BTA in the winter when the wren family congregates there, making it possible to see seven of the nine North American wrens in one day. The real treasure in the wren hunt is Winter Wren and, as its common name serendipitously implies, winter is the only time it can be seen at BTA.

Birders love wrens because they're busy and vocal, secretive but not shy, and exquisitely adapted for the environmental niche they fill. Oh, and did I mention most of their common names actually make sense! Though they don't describe physical characteristics, four of those wren names place their bearer in proper BTA microhabitats. This comes in handy for successfully completing the wren challenge.

So, you look for Marsh Wren in the marsh (the reeds around Ayer Lake), Cactus Wren around cactus (try the Cactus Garden), Canyon Wren in the canyon (look and listen where Queen Creek pinches the main trail up against the vertical walls of Magma Ridge), and Rock Wren on the rocks (watch for it doing its "push-ups" below Picketpost Mansion.) And Winter Wren in winter. One, and sometimes two, are usually found between mid-October and the end of February. This is the smallest member of the family, a tiny, plump ball of dark brown stripes with a ridiculously short tail which it apparently cocks straight up at all times to make it look longer. It'll be calling "Chimp, chimp, chimp!" Look for it especially in brush tangles or deadfall along Queen Creek at the east end of the park.

If you're keeping score, that's five species, but the names of the last two won't tell you where or when to look. Though I once saw a House Wren inside Clevenger House, the stone shelter in the Herb Garden, it is typically found in the same habitats as Winter Wren. Be careful because these two are the most similar of all our wren species and share the troglodyte genus. House Wrens are larger than Winters, with proportionately longer tails and bills, and lighter and grayer plumage overall.

The seventh wren is Bewick's. No, not Buick's, but I have seen one out in the parking lot. It was named by John James



Winter Wren



House Wren



Rock Wren



Canyon Wren



Bewick's Wren



Cactus Wren



House Wren inside log



Marsh Wren

Audubon to honor his friend, Thomas Bewick, who wrote and illustrated *A History of British Birds* in the eighteenth century. Bewick's is the plainest member of the family, just gray-brown, but it still sports the family tail, striped and cocked, and a long, bright white racing stripe above the eye. Look for Bewick's any place at BTA but particularly in the mesquites between the Herb Garden and the creek. It'll be calling "See me me me me me!"

BTA has its other winter specialties besides Winter Wren. For several consecutive years a rare Mexican vagrant, the Rufous-backed Robin, showed up reliably around the pistachio trees along the main trail through the riparian canyon, attracting birders from all over the country. It was not found last year, but I'm betting large sums there will be another this winter. And one winter a Northern Saw-whet Owl famously played hide-and-seek for months with birders searching for its daytime roosts in deep foliage along Queen Creek.

A recent and fascinating addition to BTA's birdlist is the Broad-billed

Hummingbird, a Mexican species typically found only as far north as southern Arizona's "sky islands." Broad-billeds began showing up at BTA in the late '90s and breeding was confirmed in 2002. The latest chapter to this exciting BTA back story was the discovery, in the fall of 2006, of a Broad-billed x Violet-crowned hybrid, only the second such hybrid hummingbird ever documented. Dubbed "El Catrin" by BTA staff for its beauty and showmanship, it is still seen daily hanging around the Turks's Cap in the hummingbird garden.

There are water birds at BTA too. Ayer Lake attracts migratory waterfowl in winter, and birders at this season may hear the rattle of a kingfisher as it patrols the lake margins or the whinny of a sora as it skulks through the reed beds as coots and grebes dive for water vegetation and small fish respectively.

Boyce-Thompson in winter combines all the elements of a birder's perfect day--lots of birds in diverse habitats, the opportunity to study similar species side by side, and the possibility, around every bend in the trail, for a lifer or a truly rare bird, all surrounded by the natural beauty of Queen Creek purling along between Magma Ridge and majestic Picketpost Mountain. Wait until fall migration is over, then head out to BTA to meet the unique wren family and enjoy the park's spectacular scenery and fascinating history. Wren time is the best time at BTA, and wren time is winter.

FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULE

Desert Rivers Trips

October 7, Tuesday, Huachuca Canyon with Tucson Audubon. This will be a four-mile (roundtrip) hike up an attractive canyon on Fort Huachuca. All drivers will be required to show drivers license, car registration, and proof of insurance to enter the Fort. All participants will have to show picture ID cards (drivers license will do.) If you are not a US citizen, please contact the leader. Meet at the carpooling site in time for a 4:30 a.m. departure or at Houghton Road north of I-10 before 5:00 a.m. (180 miles roundtrip) Leader: Jim Hays jhays@iname.com or 520-203-3489 Reservation required.

Oct. 11, Saturday, Western Maricopa County, led by Mike Rupp. Journey with us once again on this annual trip to various sites in the west valley and on out to Gillespie Dam. Meet at 6:30 AM at the Safeway parking lot on the northwest corner of McDowell Rd & 7th St., Phoenix. Contact Marion or Charles Saffell at marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393

Oct. 19, Sunday, Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, led by Tice Supplee, Director of Bird Conservation, Audubon Arizona. This trip will be Desert Rivers' first field trip to Cibola NWR. The Refuge, located South of Blythe, CA, on the AZ-CA border, on the lower Colorado River, is home to 288 species of birds, including many species of migratory songbirds. The bald eagle, southwestern willow flycatcher and Yuma clapper rail are among the endangered birds that use Cibola NWR. Time and meeting place to be announced. For reservations contact Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393.

Oct 25, Saturday, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, led by Cindy Marple. A ground squirrel hops across your path, a Harris Hawk lands on a saguaro limb, a lizard does "pushups" to expose his blue abdomen from a prominent rock. More than 250 bird and 72 terrestrial species have been tallied over the years as both permanent and migratory Arboretum residents. If we are lucky, we will get to see the rare hybrid hummingbird. Meet at the SW Regional Library parking lot, Greenfield and Guadalupe, we'll be departing promptly at 7 a.m. Let us know if you plan to meet us at the Arboretum, where we will begin our walk at 8 a.m. Bring water, and lunch or snacks, and wear comfortable walking shoes. \$7.50 entrance fee if not a member, some free passes are occasionally donated for use on our field trips. Reservations: Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480-668-9393.

October 25, Saturday, Patagonia, with Tucson Audubon. We'll stroll down Blue Haven Road; check out the Roadside Rest, Harshaw Creek Road and other good habitats for lingering migrants and winter residents. Meet at Houghton and I-10. at 6:30a.m. Bring lunch. (90 miles roundtrip) Res. required. Leader: Nigel Crook nigelscrook@yahoo.com or 520-304-0649

Nov. 1, Saturday, Granite Reef Dam & Salt-Verde Rivers, led by Charles Saffell. Once again, it's time for Charles' Fall trip to this riparian area. We will meet at the Walgreens parking lot on the SE corner of McKellips & Power Rd. in East Mesa. We will leave this area promptly at 7:30 a.m. We will be driving in and out of the various picnic areas, getting out of cars, and

*Charles Saffell, Field Trips Director
See Desert Rivers website for all details*

taking short strolls along the River, and continuing up to Saquaro Lake. Bring a lunch, lots of water. We'll stop briefly for lunch. Tonto Forest permit required in advance of entering. Reservations; Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393.

November 1 & 2, Northeast Arizona / White Mountain Reservoirs, with AZFO Field Expeditions – NOT your typical birding field trip! So what is the difference between a birding field trip and an AZFO Field Expedition? Field Expeditions are organized with a specific purpose and data-gathering goal in mind. Typically, they will be located in little-known or under-birded areas where the seasonal status of birds is incomplete. Also different from typical birding field trips, most expeditions will be two or more days long and all participants do not remain together. Instead, participants are divided into several teams, each with a qualified leader, which conduct surveys in different areas during the day. Normally, all participants will reconvene during lunch or dinner at a base camp or at other designated locations to review what was discovered. Only those individuals who have registered as preliminary members are eligible to participate in AZFO Field Expeditions. Please register with John Yerger by email (jyerger24@yahoo.com) or phone (814-308-4078) See AZFO at www.azfo.org for more information.

November 4, Tuesday, Mount Lemmon, with Tucson Audubon. Mount Lemmon can be a fun winter birding outing, and we'll get some nice Catalina mountain air today to help us vote with clear thinking on our return. Don't worry - no politics on the trip! Meet at the McDonald's parking lot on the NE corner of Catalina Highway and Tanque Verde Road at 7:00 a.m.. Remember to bring your car pass if you've got one (USFS fee area). Back by 3 p.m. ~50 miles roundtrip. Reservation req. Leader: Larry Liese larryliese@prodigy.net or 520- 743-3520

Nov. 8, Sat. , Seven Springs area, led by Joy Dingley. Once again, Joy Dingley will be leading us to the beautiful Seven Springs area of the NE Valley. More info on website soon. Reservations, Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net, 480 668-9393.

Nov 15, Saturday, Hassayampa River Preserve, led by Harvey Beatty. Reservations; Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393.

Nov. 22, Saturday, Western Maricopa County, led by Mike Rupp. Meet at the Safeway parking lot on the northwest corner of McDowell Rd & 7th St. at 6:30AM. Reservations; Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393.

Dec. 6, Saturday, SANTA CRUZ FLATS, led by Claudia Kirscher. Journey with us once again, down to Santa Cruz Flats with Claudia Kirscher. This area is great for various hawks, and always produces some interesting finds. Reservations; Charles or Marion Saffell, marisaff@cox.net; 480 668-9393.

Consult the Desert Rivers website for any changes, additions, or cancellations prior to trip dates.

EVENTS- OCT. / DEC.08

Oct. 4, Saturday, First Chandler Family Birdwalk at Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 E.Chandler Heights Rd. Bring the family to Oasis Park and learn about Arizona raptors, with live raptors from Liberty Wildlife. Free Birdwalks with loaner binoculars and expert guides will help you identify all the birds to be found at the ponds, and share their knowledge with you. Walks start at 8AM, and leave every 15-20 minutes, until 12. *This program is sponsored by Bashas Supermarkets.*

Oct. 14, Tuesday, General Membership Meeting , at the Gilbert Community Center, 132 W. Bruce Ave. Liberty Wildlife's Arizona Raptors! Liberty Wildlife will bring six of their education (nonreleasable) birds, including a Golden Eagle! This is our once a year special meeting at which we encourage you to bring your children and grandchildren! Liberty Wildlife is a local organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and conservation of the birds and animals of Arizona. This is truly a unique opportunity to see the birds up close, and to get to ask questions about how the birds live, what they eat, and how they are cared for by the volunteers. Since we anticipate a lot of children, we will hold our announcements until after the program. Come at 6:30 to meet and have refreshments, program starts at 7PM.

October 18, Saturday, 8 AM to Noon- Gilbert Family Birdwalk at the Riparian Preserve, southeast corner of Guadalupe and Greenfield Roads, east of Library, Free birdwalks with loaner binoculars, and live raptors up close!

Oct. 20, Monday DRAS Board Meeting at private art gallery, Mesa at 6:30PM. Everyone welcome to attend and opine. Contact Marion Saffell for address and details marisaff@cox.net

October 26, Sunday, 1:00 PM - "Water Ways: Water, Human Nature, and Human Culture," a presentation by Dr. Eugene Anderson, author of *Ecologies of the Heart*. Location: Sharlot Hall Museum, 415 W. Gurley St., Prescott. For more information call (928) 445-3122 or visit <http://sharlot.org/index.shtml>

Nov.1, Saturday, 8AM to Noon - Chandler Family Birdwalk 4050 E.Chandler Heights Rd. Bring the family to Oasis Park and learn about Arizona raptors, with live raptors from Liberty Wildlife. Free Birdwalks with loaner binoculars and expert guides will help you identify all the birds to be found at the ponds, and share their knowledge with you. Walks start at 8AM, and leave every 15-20 minutes, until 12. *This program is sponsored by Bashas Supermarkets.*

Nov. 18, Tuesday, DRAS Board Meeting at Bass Pro Shop at 6:30PM in upstairs meeting room. Open to everyone who wishes to attend and opine. Located at Dobson Road and Loop

Dec, 6, Saturday, 8AM to Noon - Chandler Family Birdwalk 4050 E.Chandler Heights Rd. Bring the family to Oasis Park and learn about Arizona raptors, with live raptors from Liberty Wildlife. Free Birdwalks with loaner binoculars and expert guides will help you identify all the birds to be found at the ponds, and share their knowledge with you. Walks start at 8AM, and leave every 15-20 minutes, until 12. *This program is sponsored by Bashas Supermarkets.*

Dec. 9, Tuesday, Membership meeting: BIRDING IN KENYA, with Bill Grossi. Birding in Kenya - Bill Grossi is a retired wildlife biologist formerly with the Bureau of Land Management. He spent the final 17 years of his career with the Arizona State

Office of BLM. For the past 30 years he also has spent considerable time and money viewing birds; first in North America, but now worldwide. His presentation will focus on the sights and birds he saw while in Kenya in 2007. Join us at 6:30 for refreshments and fellowship. Meeting runs from 7PM to 9PM.

Dec. 16, Tuesday, DRAS Board Meeting at Bass Pro Shop at 6:30PM in upstairs meeting room. Everyone welcome to attend and opine. Located at Dobson Road & Loop 202 Fwy, in the southeast corner- you can't miss it from the freeway exit!



Bird banding will resume at the Hassayampa River-Preserve with Kurt and Anne on the following dates: Oct.25th@ 6:30AM, Nov. 1st @6:30AM, Nov.15th@ 7AM, Dec. 6th @ 7AM,Dec.20th@ 7.

Newcomers are always welcome to observe the banding sessions, and training is available for those wanting to assist and becomes volunteers. Directions: Hassayampa River Preserve is located on Highway 60, 3 miles southeast of Wickensburg, Arizona. The preserve entrance is on the west side of the highway near mile marker 114. Contact Kurt Watzek and Anne Webster Leight at birdannabelle@hotmail.com W602-789-2828 and kwlala@att.net W 602-522-4327

The fall birdwalk schedule for the Rio Salado has been posted at www.phoenix.gov/RioSalado. Saturday bird walks will be on the first Saturday of every month at 7:30 (meeting at Central Ave). Other programs (bats, sparrows, raptors, et al) are at other times of the month, depending on the season. For those of you interested in saving some gas (who isn't?), the Rio can be reached by bus on the Zero or Blue lines. Get off at Watkins Street.

The annual **Christmas Bird Counts (CBC's)** will begin in late December. Get registered now to participate in a count area. Contact Walter Thurber at wathurber@cox.net, and see page 11. CBC's are great way to meet new people, increase your birding skills, and make a real contribution to avian science!



NOTABLE ARIZONA STATE SIGHTINGS

Short-billed Dowitcher (*Limnodromus griseus*), Arlington Valley Sludge Pond, Maricopa County. This juvenile Short-billed Dowitcher was discovered by Kurt Radamacher and Dave Powell at some sludge ponds in the Arlington Valley on 23 August 2008. It was photographed by Kurt Radamacher on 23 August 2008. Short-billed Dowitcher is a rare spring and uncommon fall transient in Maricopa County. Adult Dowitchers can be difficult to separate, but juveniles are fairly straightforward. Juvenile Long-billed is a fairly dull gray-buff bird resembling a slightly buffier version of winter adult. Juvenile Short-billed is a typical juvenile shorebird - bright buffy and crisp looking with strong contrasting feather edgings of rufous, black and buff on the back and crown feathers. The most definitive mark is the pattern of the long tertial feathers that overlay the primaries. These are plain dark gray on juvenile Long-billed, but patterned with irregular bars and stripes in Short-billed.



Sinaloa Wren (*Thryothorus sinaloa*), Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, Santa Cruz County. This Sinaloa Wren was discovered by Matt Brown and Robin Baxter on 25 August 2008 and photographed that day by Matt Brown. It was also recorded by Robin at the same time. The recording is posted below the photograph. Additional photos and a recording by Chris Benesh from 29 August are posted further down the page. Pierre Deviche recorded the calls and a long song bout on 3 September 2008. This is a potential first record for the ABA area. Key ID Points for Sinaloa Wren: It has a pale eyeline, rusty tail contrasting with brown back, gray underparts and a few streaks on the sides of the neck. Similar species of wrens with pale eyelines: Bewick's Wren is smaller and slimmer and has a brown tail with white tips. Eastern Carolina Wren is bright rusty above and bright buffy below. Mexican/Texas Carolina Wrens are browner above and less buffy below than Easterns but the tail is also browner and does not contrast with the back. Happy Wren, which



occurs almost as far north in Sonora as Sinaloa Wren, has a striped face, buffy underparts and a browner tail. The song of the Sinaloa Wren is very distinctive and diagnostic. This species is essentially a west Mexican endemic. It is regular in central Sonora and is reported to be expanding its range northward so that it now can apparently be found within 30 miles of the US border. The first photo of the Sinaloa Wren taken by Matt Brown. Note gray underparts and rusty tail.

White-eared Hummingbird (*Hylocharis leucotis*), Paradise, Cochise County. This male White-eared Hummingbird was seen starting on 13 August 2008 at the George Walker House feeders in Paradise (Jackie Lewis) and appeared to split time between the feeders there and the Cave Creek Ranch over the next couple of weeks. It was photographed by Denise Shields on 17 August 2008. The extremely prominent, bright white eyebrow of both sexes of the White-eared Hummingbird is unmistakable. White-eared Hummingbird is a rare summer resident in the mountains of Southeastern Arizona and is usually found coming to hummingbird feeders.



From the AZ Field Ornithologists
Website - www.azfo.org

Yellow-throated Vireo (*Vireo flavifrons*), Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve, Santa Cruz County. This singing Yellow-throated Vireo was discovered by David Stejskal on 26 August 2008 at the Patagonia-Sonoita Creek Preserve as a consequence of the "Patagonia Roadside Rest Area



Effect." This term was first coined in the 1970's by Jim Lane in his famous Birdfinding Guide to SE Arizona and refers to the phenomenon of the discovery of one rarity bringing birders to an area and resulting in the discovery of other rarities. The term refers to the spot a few miles away from this sighting where the discovery of nesting Rose-throated Becards at the roadside rest area brought many birders to the area who discovered additional rarities, including some that, like the Sinaloa Wren that was the magnet for this discovery, were first records for the ABA area. The Yellow-throated Vireo was photographed and recorded by Gary Rosenberg on 29 August 2008 and also photographed by Chris Benesh on the same date. Yellow-throated Vireo is a casual spring and summer visitor to Arizona. There are about 25 previous records. Note the thick vireo bill, bright yellow wash on head and throat, grayish flanks, prominent white wing bars and yellow spectacles.



Three Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were discovered and photographed by Brendon Grice on 11 June 2008 at the Gilbert Water Ranch. He reported that they were very wary. In this photo, the right hand bird is a sleeping male Mallard in partial eclipse plumage.

Once fairly regular in Arizona, in the last several decades Fulvous Whistling Duck has been much rarer. Fulvous Whistling-Duck is an ABC Review Species.

Sabine's Gull (*Xema sabini*), Grebe Pond, Buenos Aires NWR, Pima County. This beautiful alternate-plumaged Sabine's Gull was found by Philip Kline on 28 August 2008 at Grebe Pond in the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge. It stayed for three days and was photographed by Philip on 28 August 2008 and on 30 August 2008 by Jerome Smith. Sabine's gull is a casual spring and rare and irregular fall migrant through the state. Most records are of immatures. In flight, Sabine's gulls of all ages have a striking and diagnostic wing pattern. At rest, the gray hood in adults is very extensive and it has a unique black lower border (seen best in the second photo). The black bill with a yellow tip is diagnostic in adults. The name of this bird is one of the most mispronounced of all bird names. It is pronounced roughly suh-bean.



Editor's Note : The Arizona Field Ornithologists website contains all the uncommon and rare bird species that have occurred in Arizona for the past two years. You can access databases, photos, ornithological papers, and Field Trip information on a variety of web pages. Your rare bird sightings can be submitted to the Arizona Bird Committee for review through the AZFO website. A Membership Form is available on their website as well, and all levels of birders are welcome to join.

BIRDING IN ALAMOS, MEXICO!



Black Vultures



Roseate Spoonbills

Am White Pelicans

Desert Rivers is pleased to announce our participation with Nature Treks to provide quality birding trips to Mexico! Contact Nature Treks at : www.naturetreks.net for complete information and a registration packet. A **full itinerary** for this trip is available online under "trip list". Your participation assists the

BIRDING IN ALAMOS, MEXICO: TROPICAL DECIDUOUS FOREST AND MANGROVE ESTUARIES

November 15-20, 2008 in collaboration with Desert Botanical Garden, December 12-17, 2008, January 27-February 1, 2009 and February 20-25, 2009

Join **Nature Treks Passages** for a journey to Colonial Alamos in Southern Sonora, Mexico. Most likely we will be able to see more than 125 bird species, including neotropical ones such as Bare-throated Tiger Heron, Squirrel Cuckoo, Lilac-crowned and White-fronted parrots, Elegant Trogon, and Black-throated Magpie Jay. **Your Guide - Larry Liese** makes regular forays into Mexico to discover birding hotspots there.

TRIP COST AND REGISTRATION

For the February trip the price is \$1599 based on double occupancy and a minimum of 8 people. The single supplement is \$200. This includes van transportation from Tucson (and Phoenix on the November trip), all accommodations, all meals, guides, fees for all activities, tips, emergency medical trip insurance, and a donation to Desert Botanical Garden on the November trip. The following are not included: airfare to the starting place of the trip, alcoholic beverages, tips for the guides, and costs resulting from illness, injury, or emergency evacuation, program changes, and delays beyond our control. To register for this tour, contact Debra Tranberg at info@naturetreks.net or call (520) 696-2002 for a registration packet. A deposit of \$200 per person is required to reserve a spot on the trip. Full payment of the tour fee is due ninety days prior to the tour departure. If you have any questions, please contact us at (520) 696-2002 or info@naturetreks.net.

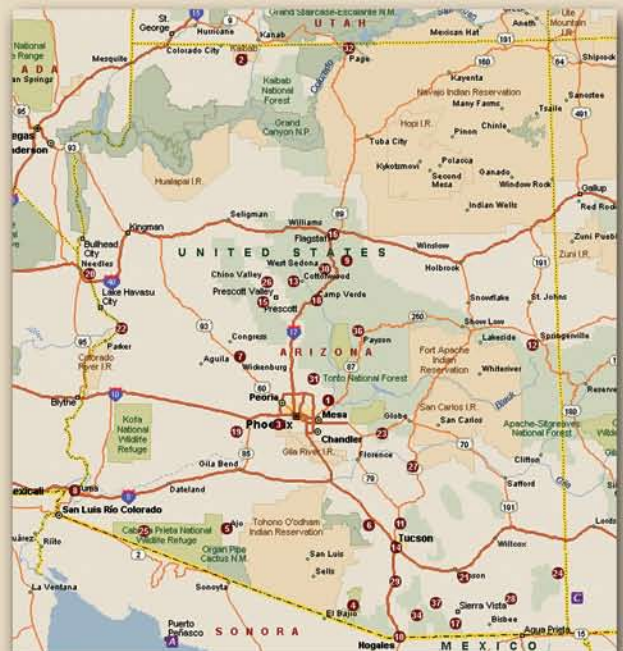
2008 CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS COMING! Walter Thurber

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird species and individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive ornithological database that enables monitoring of winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

Participants are typically assigned to teams based on their bird identification skill level and endurance. Many counts hold a compilation dinner at the end of the day where results are tabulated and stories shared. A \$5.00 participation fee defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the overall count results. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one that interests you and contact the compiler for more information.

The Count List 2008-2009

The 2008-2009 Arizona Christmas Bird Count list includes a couple of nearby counts in New Mexico and Mexico. The map to the right shows the various counts that will take place. For complete information on all counts with links to current and past count data, and contact info for each count compiler, see the Maricopa Audubon website at : www.maricopaaudubon.org



The Family Album

Family : Emberizidae
Article and Photos: Cindy Marple

The New World Sparrows are a very large and diverse family, with over 300 species worldwide. Usually we think of sparrows as small, brown, streaked birds. However this family also includes Juncos, Towhees, Longspurs and Buntings, many of which are more colorful.

Many sparrows, like the Harris's and Rufous-winged seen here, have strong facial patterns. These patterns, along with streaking on the breast (or lack of it) and relative bill size, are field marks which will help separate many of the species.

Sparrows have conical, seed-cracking bills, but they eat seeds mainly in winter. During the breeding season their primary food is insects. Nestlings are fed almost entirely on insects. In general, Sparrows' bills are much smaller than those of other seed-eating families such as Finches and Grosbeaks.

They feed primarily on the ground, as compared to Finches which prefer to feed in shrubs and trees. Towhees in particular are known for their characteristic double-scratch when foraging through leaf litter, a behavior seen in the photo of the Green-tailed Towhee.



Rufous-winged Sparrow



Dark-eyed Junco



Brewer's Sparrow



Green-tailed Towhee



Harris's Sparrow

ANNOUNCEMENTS

IMPORTANT MEETING NOTICE

Desert Rivers monthly meetings are now held at the Page Park Community Center Building in Gilbert at 132 West Bruce Ave., not the Regional Library. Meetings are again on **Tuesday** nights, 7PM to 9PM, with doors open at 6:30PM. Our first Sept. meeting saw nearly 70 people who enjoyed hearing from Liberty Wildlife's Director, Terry Stevens, about bird rescue and rehabilitation, and Liberty's expansion plans for 2009.

The Arizona Field Ornithologists are excited to announce the AZFO Bird Sound Library as a new feature of the AZFO web site. The library consists of web pages of recordings of Arizona bird songs and calls that can be played in your browser. The library is made possible by the incredible generosity of Pierre Deviche who donated 331 recordings of 260 species to initiate the library. The library can be accessed by going to:

http://www.azfo.org/soundlibrary/sounds_intro.html

Note these features of the Sound Library compared to commercial recordings: 1) Long recordings: most are up to 90 seconds long. 2) Local dialects: nearly all recordings are made in Arizona. 3) Downloads: you can download and use the MP3 files for noncommercial Purposes. Mike Moore, AZFO Photo Editor

The Desert Rivers' Nominating Committee members for 2008-2009 are: Harvey Beatty (hbeatty@cox.net), Walter Thurber (wathurber@cox.net) and Karen Stucke (kjstucke@gmail.com) If you have an interest in becoming a board member, or wish to nominate another person, please contact a Nominating Committee member before March, 2009.

DONORS AND GIFTS

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

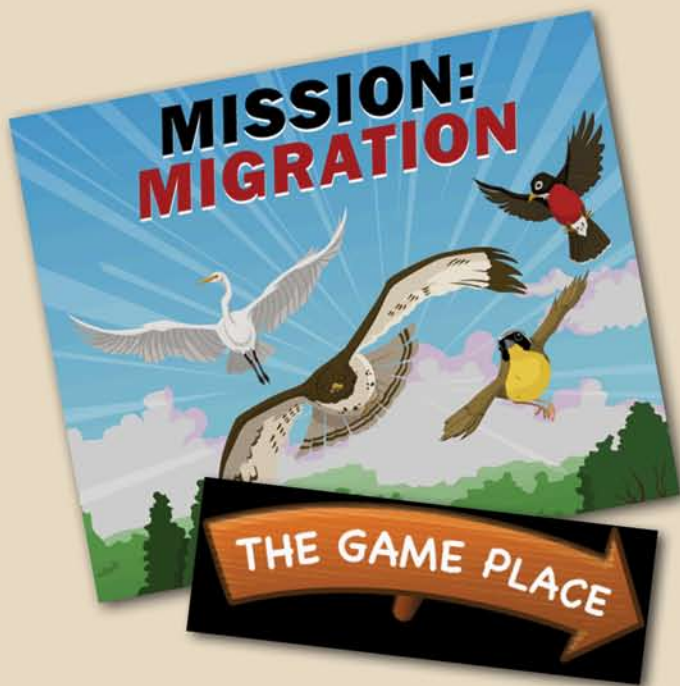


Bass Pro Shops for their donation of facilities and food for a Father's Day Parking Lot Cook out that benefitted Desert Rivers and for use of their meeting room for Desert Rivers' Board meetings each month in the Mesa/Phoenix store.

New Members

Pat Dutrack
Alicia Love
Bill Leggett & Peggy Booth
Karen Schedler
Thom Hulén

Tom Najbar & Lillian Perdny
Jamie & Leslie Bradford & family
David Despain
Jeanne LeSage
Katie Keeton



KIDS PAGE



Check out Audubon's Kids Page- they have games to play, live bird cams, and fun activities!

<http://www.audubon.org/educate/kids/>

Word Search

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

All these words are about bird identification!
(Most are spelled backwards!!)

AGE, BEAK COLOR, BEHAVIOUR, BILL LENGTH, BILL SHAPE
COLOR PATTERNS, EYE COLOR, EYE RINGS,
FEATHER WEAR, FEEDING, FLIGHT STYLE, HABITAT,
PLUMAGE, POSTURE, SEASON, TAIL LENGTH, WING SHAPE

ARE YOU HATCHING AN EARLY BIRD?

Are you the parent or grandparent of a child who is showing interest in nature, more particularly bird watching? Then we may have just the club for you.

Last October a small group of children and parents started meeting once a month over the winter to introduce the children to the enjoyment of bird watching while giving them some of the skills they will need to take this hobby further.

We meet at Gilbert Riparian Preserve (Gilbert Water Ranch) on the 3rd Saturday of the month from October to March. The sessions usually last for about an hour and we meet early, 7.00 am to 7.30 am depending on the available light. That, for most of the parents is the hard bit but it does explain why we called the club the "Early Birds".

The easy part is that it doesn't cost anything to join, we will provide binoculars for the session, notebooks and hand outs. Each month there will be a task for the children to undertake at home but the aim is for the children to enjoy the experience so it is always an easy task. The target ages are between 7 and 13 but younger children are welcome though they will need to be able to write in notebooks.

At the end of the season we will arrange a special field trip to another location to try out our new birding skills and enjoy a social occasion. Last year we spent a very good morning at Boyce Thompson Arboretum and followed that with a picnic.

Originally we imagined that the club would be for children only but many of the parents enjoyed the mornings so now it is open to adults as well, BUT YOU MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A CHILD!

We need to have permission slips, emergency contact numbers and we need to know how many leaders and the amount of materials to supply so it is important to register for the club.

If you are interested then contact me at joy.dingley@cox.net or 480-419-9804.

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MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings are held at the Page Park Community Center in Gilbert, at 132 W. Bruce Ave, on second Tuesdays at 7 to 9PM, September through May. Doors open at 6:30PM, and everyone is welcome. Page Park is one block north of Elliot Rd and one block west of Gilbert Rd, near "downtown" Gilbert. See the DRAS website under "Events" heading for listing of topics and speakers. Refreshments provided.

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.

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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 : knullis@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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