



DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

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

VOLUME 2 - WINTER 2008 NEWSLETTER



In This Issue :

- Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks
- "Save the Verde" Campaign news
- Audubon at Home Program
- Poles Apart- Seabirds of the North and South
- Birding the Pinal Mountains
- Notable AZ sightings
- The Family Album
- New Kids Page

Harris's Hawk - Cindy Marple

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Mike Rupp

I hope you'll enjoy the detailed report on page 12 on the first-ever Common or Eurasian Teal seen in the state by Pierre Deviche. Though this happened several months ago, the Gilbert Riparian Preserve is still increasing its reputation as a premier birding site in the valley and the site of numerous rare bird sightings such as this the Roseate Spoonbill that was at the Preserve over a two week period recently.

I'm excited that Cindy Marple has shared images and descriptions about her birding trips to each of the poles- places not many of us will likely venture. Enjoy the middle spread on her fascinating trips to see Puffins, Fulmars, Terns, Razorbills, Wandering Albatross, and many other "pole" species.

The next step in the Verde River water issue has been taken, and I've included a short notice from the Center for Biological Diversity below, and a letter on page 3 from Anthony Kuzik, Ph.D., a scientist who has been playing a major role in assessing potential impacts of Prescott and Prescott Valley's plan to divert water from the Verde River. I strongly urge each of you to **sign the online petition** mentioned in Tony's letter, and become acquainted with this issue.

The Arizona Department of Water resources (ADWR) Approved the City of Prescott's Application for Modification of Assured Water Supply. The legal wheels have been set in motion. Even though ADWR allocation from the Big Chino Water Ranch was reduced several hundred acre-feet from the requested amount, over 8,000 acre-feet were granted. Many of the original groups and individuals who objected to the City of Prescott's application will appeal ADWR's decision.

We are responding with a Save the Verde Day in Downtown Prescott. As the legal process moves forward, we want to publicly bring to light the seriousness of the threat to the Verde under Arizona's obsolete water laws.

Midmorning - Rally, press conference at the Prescott Courthouse Square
Afternoon - Presentation of endorsements and signed petitions to the Upper Verde River Watershed Protection Coalition Board

Evening - Panel discussion of Verde topics including ecological values economics of the pipeline, hydrological assessment, and more

Would you consider helping us plan this event or attend to show support? There are many tasks needing an extra hand - publicity, staffing the rally, attendance at the meeting, helping with panel logistics, or simply linking your members to our Save the Verde Petition (a companion, for individuals, to the position statement), etc.

Joanne Oellers, Verde Campaign Coordinator

Center for Biological Diversity (928)772-8204 joellers@biologicaldiversity.org
savetheverde.org

Watch for carpooling information via the DRAS website and monthly email announcements. DRAS plans to participate in the January 28 rally to make the public more aware of the environmental problems that could result from taking water from the Verde to sustain growth in the Prescott area. Signing the online petition is a practical way that you can help oppose this action- please take a moment to do so if you agree with the facts presented by Tony Krzyzik and the CBD. DRAS is a signatory.

"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

— John Muir

"There are no words that can tell the hidden spirit of the wilderness that can reveal its mystery, its melancholy, and its charm."

— Theodore Roosevelt

AUDUBON AT HOME

Krys Hammers



Locating your house and backyard on a road map places it in the context of other homes and the streets that connect them. This unique, political location allows you to send and receive mail and other deliveries, guide guests to your home, and live with the security that emergency services can find you. While this place is a part of your personal identity today, it may have been home to someone else in the past and will undoubtedly be the address of another in the future.

But your backyard is much more than a named spot on a political map. It is also a place where many elements of the natural world overlap today as they have been intersecting for millions of years and will continue to meet into the future. In order to understand this place on the Earth, to learn its secrets from the past, and to act as its steward into the future, you will want to learn your Ecological Address.

Ecological Address is a term currently used to define the elements of the environment that characterize a specific locale at a certain time. One way to understand this address is to envision your spot on the road map with a variety of overlays - one showing water systems, one showing geological regions and forms, another showing climate zones, still another showing biological communities, and finally one showing land use. While all of these components are fundamental and integral to the identity of your backyard, the most complex are the many biological communities interact there. Understanding that there are multitudes of organisms that may spend their entire lives in your yard or stop to rest for just a few moments will add to your appreciation for the value of this place and your enjoyment of it.

After identifying these components of your home and backyard today, explore how this ecological address has changed over time. What elements were different 25...100...500 and even 1,000 years ago? Why did these changes take place? And what elements will change in the future? Do you have any control over these changes?

Here are some resources that will help you and your family discover your Ecological Address - past, present, and future. While an exploration of these resources at a local, backyard level will teach you much about your specific place on these maps, looking at regional and even global systems will show you how your backyard is connected with many other sites in your community, region of the country and even around the globe.

http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_Watersheds.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_GeologicalRegion.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_Climate.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_LandUse.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_Ecosystems.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_Plants.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_BirdsWildlife.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/Explore_Insects.html
http://www.audubon.org/bird/at_home/pdf/explore_worksheet.pdf



Above : Immature Coopers Hawk

Having a little trouble separating look alike accipiters, Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk, from one another? Aren't we all, and this is the season here in the Valley when we are most likely to see these "bird specialists" as they hang around feeding stations waiting for an easy meal. This fall I spent a few days at Hawk Ridge in Duluth, Minnesota during peak accipiter migration. I'd like to summarize for you what I think I learned, but first let me draw an analogy.

If you're in the gallery at a pro golf tournament and you happen to be a fairway away without binoculars as Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson tee off, you can tell them apart because of their "plumage." But what if it's Phil and Ernie Els? Their "plumage" is the same. If you're a student of the game, though, you could readily tell them apart because their swings are different. This explains why an expert hawk watcher can identify an accipiter in flight three miles away but might have trouble with a perched bird three yards away, and it also explains why you and I have serious identification issues with these birds.

I've listed the eleven most widely held distinguishing features of Coops and Shins and what the experts I've spoken with, and read, think of them, but first let me summarize what I learned at Hawk Ridge: It is easier, with practice, to separate these species in flight, but "practice" requires multiple birds over multiple days. Even the experts will have birds that simply cannot be identified to species. It can be impossible to label even the best accipiter photographs because they don't show relative size, and because angles of light and view notoriously obfuscate even the most reliable field marks in photos. Male Sharp-shinneds in hand are remarkably tiny little hawks.

For our summary, I'm moving from flight to perched birds and from top to bottom on the birds. Included are one reliable age distinction and one little known gender distinction which will help a lot here in the Valley in winter when most of the accipiters we see are juveniles.

Size--Yes, the size progression is from male Shin up to female Coop, and there is no overlap, but size differences between female Shins and male Coops can fool even the experts. With the possible exception of male Shins, identifying accipiters by size is an exercise in futility unless you have two birds flying together. For individual, perched birds, forget it.

Flight Jizz--Shins are buoyant, nervous, hesitant flyers with quick wingbeats. They "row" through the air with lots of "wrist" action and usually soar on flat wings. Coops are steady, confident, deliberate, flyers. Their wingbeat, though also quick, is up and down without any wrist action, and they usually soar with a slight dihedral.

Head Projection--In flight the Shin head looks tiny. It projects little, if any, beyond the leading edge of the wings which appear "hunched" because the wrists leads the action. On Coops the head looks big. It projects well beyond the leading edge of the wing because that edge appears flat or straight. These features, combined with flight jizz, are excellent keys in the eyes of practiced hawk counters.

Head Shape--Shins have a smooth, uniformly rounded or curved head, whereas Coops typically show a bit of a peak toward the rear of the crown

COOP OR SHIN?

Article & Photos : Jim Burns

which gives them a square-headed appearance. Be careful, though, in windy conditions as nape feathers can blow up. This feature may be little help on flying birds, but has always been the diagnostic feature which works best for me on perched birds.

Crown Contrast--Adult Coops typically have a black cap which contrasts noticeably, often sharply, with nape and back color, whereas Shins don't show much contrast in this area. Use at your own risk. It doesn't work so well for immature birds or those in flight, but can be corroborating evidence on close, perched birds.

Eye Position--Here's a highly touted diagnostic feature that doesn't work for me. Theoretically, because the two species' eyes are the same size but the Shin head is smaller, its eye appears centrally located on the head, whereas the Coop eye appears farther forward. Good luck.

Eye Color--Accipiter irises darken with age. Immature birds show a white to yellow iris. Adult birds have a darker eye, orange to deep red. This is a fact. It works, and is even discernible on flying birds.

Breast Pattern--Adult accipiters' breast are horizontally barred with warm buff to bright rufous, juveniles' vertically streaked with brown or rufous. However, though none of the field guides discuss it, immature



Below : Immature Sharp-shinned Hawk, female

Adult Sharp-shinned Hawk, female

Shins are sexually dimorphic. The streaking on immature female Shins is thick and ropy. The streaking on immature male Shins, like that on both male and female immature Coops, is thin. This field mark really helps in the process of elimination.

Leg Thickness--Shins' legs have been likened to pencils, very thin giving them a long-legged look, whereas Coops' legs are thicker which gives them a short-legged appearance. True, but use only as corroborative evidence in conjunction with other more

Continued on page 13



"SAVE THE VERDE" ACTION UPDATE

Anthony J. Krzysik, Ph.D.
Research and Consultant Ecologist
Prescott Audubon Society, Conservation Chair
krzysikaj@cableone.net

If you have not done so already, PLEASE sign the "Center for Biological Diversity" petition to protect the Upper Verde River, referenced "Save_the_Verde.org". Copy & Paste the following URL to find the petition.

http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/2167/t/7011/petition.jsp?petition_KEY=1279

PLEASE send this to anyone and everyone that you feel would be interested in the ecological viability of the Upper Verde River Ecosystem.

Also, please keep up with the correct hydrological and ecological science, and the complex economics relevant to the Big Chino Pipeline. The city of Prescott has obfuscated the issue by cherry-picking and misrepresenting data, and ignoring the research, science professional articles, technical reports, letters, and conclusions of U.S. Geological Survey and other expert hydrologists, geologists, and ecologists. Please remember that as in ALL environmental issues the science is relatively simple and straight forward; but the politics and policy-making are incredibly difficult, if not impossible to address, because of profit/power struggles, social repercussions, and culture ideology. These issues are beyond science and technical solutions, at least in contemporary society.

Additionally, a potential motivation for the pipeline is to significantly increase regional growth. This translates to exceptional profits for a few land-owners and developers, while concurrently the tax-payer gets to foot the entire bill for the pipeline AND exceptional increases in infrastructure costs. The pipeline costs will increase dramatically on the basis of water acre-feet for several critical reasons. First of all, Prescott is probably not entitled to (legally or environmentally) all the water that it is requesting. Second, legal costs and financing are predicted to increase. And thirdly, there are the increasing costs for materials, labor, and right of way property acquisition. With more water there will be a significant increase in infrastructure costs: roads, stormwater runoff, water recharge, wastewater treatment, landfills, and power requirements.

On top of everything, current residents will lose all the quality of life amenities that they moved here for: open space, wilderness, wildlife, recreation values, less traffic congestion, less noise, less air pollution and fugitive dust, less crime, less gangs and drugs, and the list could go on. People living here want Prescott to be Prescott, not Phoenix or Denver or LA. Ironically, one can easily develop a logical and realistic analogy between the exponential growth of Los Angeles and it's stealing of water from rural Owens Valley (see Marc Reisner's Cadillac Desert). Anyway, the citizens will pay more and more while receiving less and less; just so a few very wealthy and powerful folks can become still richer and more powerful.

As you are aware, the proposed Big Chino Water Ranch and Chino Grande/Chino Valley Water Projects, as well as, future planned massive development in Yavapai County in the Big Chino region, represent significant and irreversible degradation to the instream flows and ecological viability of the Verde River; including severe risks to biodiversity, endangered/threatened and sensitive species, and recreation opportunities. All science-based field investigations and published literature by the U.S. Geological Survey, the final and comprehensive expertise in this issue, have clearly concluded that 80-86% of the water supplying the first 24 miles of the Verde River (Upper Verde) originates from springs directly fed by the Big Chino Aquifer. In other words, the amount of water pumped by the Big Chino Water Ranch will be roughly equivalent to the amount of water that supplies the Verde River.

Potential pumping by the Prescott Water Ranch and others in the area could equal the total historical (predevelopment) natural flow of the Big Chino into the Upper Verde River. Over time, hydrologists predict that the Upper Verde and its riparian habitat would go from a perennial (permanent surface flow) ecosystem to an ephemeral (dry wash) ecosystem, possessing surface flows only briefly after storm events. Del Rio Springs (3 miles north of Chino Valley) at one time fed approximately 14-16% of the Upper Verde River flow, but these springs are currently dry, a direct consequence of City of Prescott wells and the growing local population.

The Verde River is one of the last flowing rivers in the entire Southwest, and was listed by "American Rivers" as one of the ten most endangered rivers in North America. Because of their rarity and ecological uniqueness, Southwestern riverine ecosystems are critical landscape elements for dispersal corridors, and resident, migratory, and over-wintering species. I have quickly added-up 30 sensitive or endangered/threatened species of vertebrates, invertebrates, and plants that are potentially found in the Upper Verde. I am sure that there are many more, and am working on a list of potential species. An extremely important reality that has not been addressed for the Upper Verde is that it should be a site for endangered species repatriation. As Southwestern rivers and riparian habitats are increasingly degraded and disappear, there is a need for repatriating and relocating remaining and increasingly isolated populations and gene pools into suitable remaining habitat. Prescott officials will cry, why should we take care of the last aquatic/riparian drying-up gene pools of the Southwest, the Verde is only a single river. Let another municipality protect another river. Well guess what, all municipalities are saying the same exact thing. This is ecologically well known as "Cumulative Impacts", under the reality of Tragedy of the Commons.

Because of the potentially very severe and irreversible ecological dangers to the Upper Verde, it is truly unbelievable and beyond comprehension and logic that the city of Prescott has made no efforts to plan or develop three critical mitigations for the ecological impacts of their Big Chino pipeline project: *Aquifer and instream flow monitoring strategies, A habitat conservation plan, Climate Change impacts.* On the other hand, the city of Prescott has produced a website that blatantly contradicts all currently documented science-based data and factual technical evidence.

Importantly, recent peer-reviewed science articles from prestigious professional journals and our National Academy of Science have predicted dramatic long-term climatic drought for the Southwest and "dramatic water shortages that cannot be addressed by either innovative technologies or water conservation efforts".

A fresh off the press book (5 January 2009, but available now from amazon.com) is mandatory reading for all folks currently living or planning to move to the Southwest. See especially Part Four, River of Limits, Chapters 13-17, Pages 163-225.

Powell, J.L. 2008. Dead Pool: Lake Powell, Global Warming, and the Future of Water in the West. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA. 283pp.

For science-based water and ecological sustainability info go to Prescott's

Last Oasis website, managed by Tom Atkins, Copy & Paste:

<http://web.me.com/tatkins1943/pramalastoasis/maincontentpage.html>

Anthony J. Krzysik, Ph.D.

"AUDUBON TAKES WING"

ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT
SET FOR FEBRUARY 2009

Paul Green, Tucson Audubon,
on behalf of the Arizona Audubon Council

If you are interested in becoming an effective Audubon conservationist in Arizona, come and join others who share that interest during a day-long workshop at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson on Saturday February 28, 2009.

Among the goals of our Audubon Conservation Workshop are to determine what we consider to be the most important wildlife conservation threats in our state in 2009 and to determine the scope of their importance. Which threats span our local region, the state, and the nation? How do we in Audubon effectively address these threats, and how do we ensure that we work most effectively within the context of other conservation groups in the state, and in the context of other chapters, our state office, and National Audubon?

Inevitably, many of the issues upon which we work will fall within broader priorities for Audubon at the national level, for example, questioning details of land use and planning decisions may be part of broader concerns related to climate change and water. Our day will be a mix of presentations, discussions, and smaller workgroups, and will include representatives from other organizations, our state office, each chapter in our state (and perhaps from other states also), and from National Audubon. We anticipate setting up workgroups to work on issues following our summit, and there will be homework to do in advance. Please let us know today if you want to be involved. Please send your contact details to jbarchman@tucsonaudubon.org or call Jean on 520-622-5622.

You'll be able to access homework materials online from the beginning of November at www.tucsonaudubon.org/conservation. In addition, we shall endeavor to find local Audubon members who will provide accommodations for those traveling from outside the Tucson area.

Editor's Note: This summit ties in with the Arizona Audubon Council's strategic planning process mentioned in the adjoining article, and offers opportunities to become engaged in conservation advocacy at different levels. The DRAS board encourages DRAS members to attend this important summit to help identify environmental issues, learn more about the Council's mission, and become an advocate for Arizona's wildlife. Carpool info forthcoming.

Conservation Groups File Lawsuit to Stop Pinal County's Destruction of Lower San Pedro River Conservation Area.

PHOENIX, AZ—The Center for Biological Diversity, Maricopa Audubon Society, and Tucson Audubon Society filed a lawsuit today against Pinal County to stop the county's ongoing ecological damage to the Bureau of Land Management's lower San Pedro River conservation easement southeast of Phoenix. The suit seeks to revoke the county's eminent domain seizure of federal property, to limit entry of damaging off-road vehicle traffic, and to stop the county's dredge-and-fill operations in the river. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Phoenix. The lawsuit results from Pinal County's January 31, 2008 seizure of a local ranching family's private property, which is restricted by a Bureau of Land Management conservation easement. In 1996, the family had sold the conservation easement on its property to protect its rare year-round stream and habitat from cattle grazing and off-road vehicles. The conservation easement restricts motorized access to emergency and administrative use only. The county used eminent domain seizure to create an unrestricted passageway across the San Pedro River through the conservation area. It did so in local county court proceedings, claiming an "emergency" need to create an unrestricted San Pedro River passageway and testifying that they did not "believe BLM will raise any objection to the condemnation proceeding." Only no emergency existed, and the Bureau of Land Management objects.

ARIZONA AUDUBON COUNCIL

THE NEXT 20 YEARS

Mike Rupp &
Krys Hammers

In 1990, seven Arizona chapters of the National Audubon Society formed the Arizona Audubon Council as a vehicle to share information, identify concerns, and advocate for local environmental issues. As a 504(c) organization, the council had a paid lobbyist in the past, and is considering partnering with Audubon Arizona to fill that position once again. Over the last year, through a process of examination and strategic planning, the Council has charted a new course for the future that includes the upcoming "Audubon Takes Wing" summit in Tucson, and greater involvement in political advocacy. Krys Hammers is the current council President, and Don Farmer is the DRAS chapter representative. Audubon councils around the country give their chapters strength in numbers and present a unified approach to advocacy.



Chapter representatives charting a new course for the AZ Audubon Council, with Karen LaFrance, Sarah Porter, and Sam Campana.

The conservation easement is federal property. Seizure of federal property by the county violates the U.S. Constitution's Supremacy Clause, prohibiting seizure of federal property without federal permission.

The Bureau of Land Management did not approve the county's seizure; its signs in the conservation area still read "NO MOTORIZED VEHICLES, ADMINISTRATIVE USE ONLY." Emergency access has never been denied. The lawsuit seeks revocation of the county's eminent domain seizure of the conservation area. The county is maintaining the newly unrestricted passageway open to all traffic, including off-road vehicles. Off-road vehicles are now accessing the streambed and stream banks via the passageway. The result is accelerating erosion and destruction of streamside habitat. The county maintains its newly unrestricted passageway by bulldozing in the stream and by importing fill from outside the area, but the Clean Water Act requires a federal permit prior to dredging and filling in a year-round stream. Pinal County has no permit. The lawsuit seeks an injunction against the county's dredge-and-fill operations in the river. The Bureau of Land Management's lower San Pedro River conservation easement is home to an endangered songbird, the Southwestern willow flycatcher, which has been federally protected as endangered since 1995. The Center initiated protective efforts for the flycatcher in 1992. The lower San Pedro River has been designated as federal critical habitat for the flycatcher since 1997. "We cannot allow Pinal County's misuse of the eminent domain process to destroy the conservation area. We must protect the Southwestern willow flycatcher and the San Pedro River," said the Center's Robin Silver. "Tucson Audubon has been instrumental in securing Important Bird Area designation for the lower San Pedro River. The area is crucial habitat for recovery of the imperiled Southwestern willow flycatcher, and for the Western yellow-billed cuckoo. It is also an area of global importance for Bell's vireo. Pinal County's destructive activities must be halted," said Tucson Audubon's Paul Green. "Maricopa Audubon has a long history of protecting the San Pedro River. Pinal County's advocacy for wanton ORV abuse in such a sensitive and important conservation preserve is inexcusable," said Maricopa Audubon's Herb Fibel.

BIRDING THE PINAL MOUNTAINS

On an Arizona state map showing county lines, you may notice that Gila County's southern tip is a sharp wedge, penetrating into northeastern Pinal County. In the middle of this wedge is the 7,848-foot Pinal Peak, the highest chunk of land between the Salt and Gila Rivers. Although its upper slopes are draped in dense pine, fir, and aspen, it's too far north to be considered part of the typical southeastern sky islands; but the Salt River Canyon to the north also isolates it from the coniferous forests of the Mogollon Rim. This gives this mountain a unique character as central Arizona's own sky island, and it shares birds from both regions.

I first became curious about the Pinal Mountains when I read in Monson and Phillips' *Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona* (1991) that an Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush had been reported here mid-April 1974, a bird that was watched for over a half hour. Considering that this species has been predicted to occur in Arizona, that the isolation of the forest makes these mountains a vagrant trap, and that the species when seen well is very distinctive, I figure that it's probably a good record. I decided that these little-known mountains deserved some more birding attention.

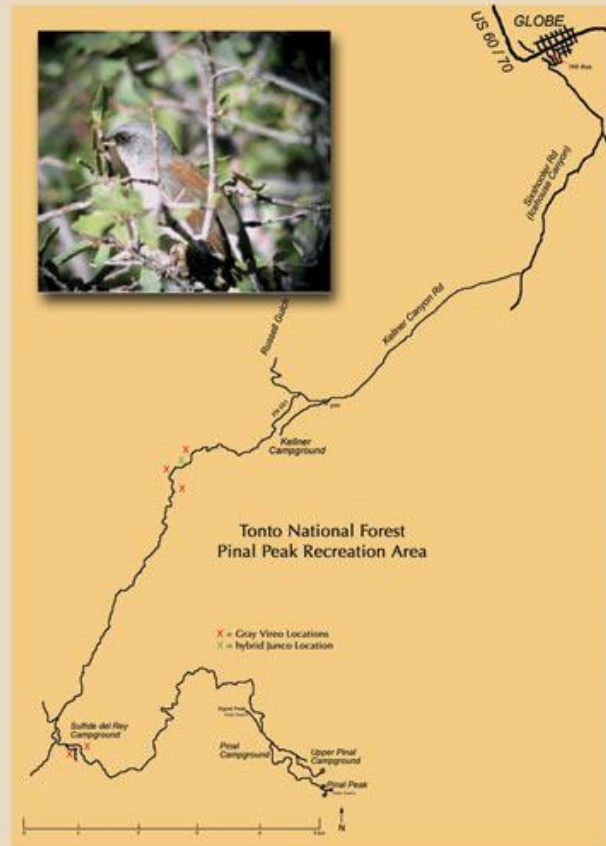
Located in the Tonto National Forest, the region is designated as the Pinal Recreation Area. As you ascend the mountain, the first habitat is chaparral, with scattered oaks and junipers until the pine forest begins. Birds here are what one would expect for much of central Arizona: year-round it's chock full of Spotted Towhees, along with resident Hutton's Vireo, Western Scrub-Jay, and Juniper Titmouse. In the summer Black-chinned Sparrow, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Gray Vireo can be found. In the upper elevations, one first enters pine forest and then near the peak a much cooler fir and aspen forest. More typical of northern Arizona forests are breeding Orange-crowned Warbler and Mountain Chickadee found here, and MacGillivray's Warbler may also breed. But several species typical of southeastern Arizona also occur here, including Bridled Titmouse; Zone-tailed Hawk; Olive, Red-faced, and Grace's Warblers; and this place is perhaps best known as the northernmost range of Yellow-eyed Junco.

To get to the Pinal Recreation Area, one must first get to Globe, along US 60/70 in Gila County east of Phoenix. Just west of the old downtown the highway is heading to the south-southeast (SSE) and bends sharply to east-northeast to cross over Pinal Creek; turn right (SSE) at Hill St. immediately on the east side of the bridge. If coming from the east, this will be a left turn just before crossing the bridge. At the stop sign in 0.2 mile turn right, then almost immediately left again to cross over the railroad tracks and to the south side of Pinal Creek; there should be signs directing you to the recreation area. In another 0.9 mile turn right on Sixshooter Road, just past a small bridge. In another 1.8 miles, turn right at a stop sign to head up Kellner Canyon.

...almost immediately after I began pishing we were surrounded by the largest flock of warblers I have ever seen in Arizona. It contained at least 75 birds, mostly Grace's Warbler, with several Olive, Yellow-rumped, Hermit, Townsend's, Red-faced, Nashville, and Painted Redstart among them.

Once on Tonto National Forest, you can pull over at any wide spot and begin birding almost anywhere. One productive spot is the former Kellner Campground, which one must now walk to, beyond a locked gate. In 2001 there was a large grove of cottonwoods here, and on June 8, while birding with Gene Loring, Peter Salomon, and Bob Proniewych, I found a singing male Hooded Warbler. In the fall of 2004 it looked as if drought had taken a toll on these cottonwoods.

Article and photo by Richard C. Hoyer,
Reprinted with permission from AZFO



Past the turnoff to Kellner Campground the road comes to a small divide with a cattle guard and the junction with Forest Route 651. To the right is another access route from US 60/70, which I have not taken, while turning left leads to the higher elevations. One passes through an area of open chaparral (Spotted Towhee, Black-chinned Sparrow, and Crissal Thrasher) before coming to the oak-juniper belt for which Gray Vireo is known. One stretch of road that has been most productive for this species is near the coordinates 33° 19.944', W 110°50.698. It was in this area on September 30, 2004, that I found a junco that appeared to be a hybrid Yellow-eyed x Dark-eyed Junco. Its plumage was most like that of Yellow-eyed Junco but the eye was a dark brown, and the call note was somewhat intermediate. At the same place and time Mark Stevenson found a "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow, probably a rare winter visitor as elsewhere in Arizona.

Shortly above this area one reaches the first pine forest. On July 30, 2001, I arrived with Tim Rodenkirk on a morning with heavy clouds and a giant, decaying monsoonal storm. When the rain finally halted in the late morning, our first stop at the Sulfide del Rey Campground seemed quiet at first. But almost immediately after I began pishing we were surrounded by the largest flock of warblers I have ever seen in Arizona. It contained at least 75 birds, mostly Grace's Warbler, with several Olive, Yellow-rumped, Hermit, Townsend's, Red-faced, Nashville, and Painted Redstart among them.

Above Sulfide del Rey, one comes to a main junction and the pass; the only area I have explored is the road to the left which leads to Pinal Peak and the

BIRDING THE PINALS 2 CONT. FROM PAGE 5

campgrounds. This first stretch stays on the south-facing slopes where chaparral reaches a higher elevation. I have had Gray Vireo in this area on a couple occasions. Where the road crosses back over to the north-facing slopes, the forest is again dense, and one finds the likes of Red-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper, and at least in early fall this is a good area for Yellow-eyed Junco. There are many private cabins from here on up to the top. Once near the top you reach a fork, the right taking you to the peak and radio towers with a more open Gambel's oak and moist chaparral. The left fork stays on the protected forested slope and ends at the Upper Pinal Campground. On my first visit May 23, 2000, I saw a Dusky-capped Flycatcher near the peak, which seems to be rare here, and a MacGillivray's Warbler, possibly a breeding bird. It is in this area where one can find Golden-crowned Kinglet, Orange-crowned Warbler, and presumably where the Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush was seen.

A lot remains to be discovered in the Pinal Mountains, both in terms of its regularly occurring avifauna as well as rare visitors. Northern Pygmy-Owl, though not mentioned specifically in either the Annotated Checklist or by Phillips, et. al. (1964), may occur here, and if so, it would be interesting to note which subspecies it is. Confirmation of breeding Dusky-capped Flycatchers would certainly be of interest, and one might be able to find mixed pairs of Yellow-eyed and Dark-eyed Juncos in the breeding season. Breeding confirmation of MacGillivray's Warbler would also be news. There is a fair amount of forest on the northern slopes, certainly too much to cover thoroughly, but it is still much less than on any of the other sky islands of southern Arizona. This means that any vagrants should be easier to find here than in other areas.

Monson, G. and Phillips, A. 1991. Annotated Checklist of the Birds of Arizona. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

Phillips, A., Marshall, J., and Monson G. 1964. The Birds of Arizona. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

WORK DAY AT THE RIPARIAN PRESERVE

Saturday, November 21 saw over 30 volunteers come together to clear brush and trees from twenty view-points along the banks of the popular Gilbert Riparian Preserve ponds. Overgrowth had been making viewing of the ponds more difficult, so Desert Rivers organized a work day to help the Preserve maintain its reputation as the premier birding location in the "east valley". A short birdwalk preceded the work to catch some of the arriving ducks and other species at the Preserve. About thirty species were seen, all being common, expected species there.

The Desert Rivers volunteers were also joined by seven volunteers from the Gilbert-Chandler Community College - our thanks go to this group of service-minded young adults for helping with this worthy project. Below, Scott Cleaves, Park Ranger and biologist at the Preserve, directed the clearing work and provided many tools for the task. Above, DRAS volunteers.



The Riparian Preserve is always in need of this kind of help. If you have a scout or high school group willing to serve, please contact the Riparian Institute at 480-503-6744 to arrange a work project. A listing of regular activities and events is at www.riparianinstitute.org



Students from Gilbert-Chandler Community College at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve during the DRAS work day.

ANNOUNCEMENT

A new discussion group following a Northwest Earth Institute course book will begin in January at the Tempe Public Library. These groups are very informative but casual, and last from 4 to 6 weeks, depending upon topic. To enroll in this course and learn all the details, contact DRAS member Jerry Lang at : jerry.lang61@comcast.net or call Mike Rupp at 602-388-4072.

THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT!

Count for Fun, Count for the Future - February 13-16, 2009

New York, NY and Ithaca, NY. Bird and nature fans throughout North America are invited to join tens of thousands of everyday bird watchers for the 12th annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC), February 13-16, 2009. A joint project of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society, this free event is an opportunity for families, students, and people of all ages to discover the wonders of nature in backyards, schoolyards, and local parks, and, at the same time, make an important contribution to conservation. Participants count birds and report their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. "The Great Backyard Bird Count benefits both birds and people. It's a great example of citizen science: Anyone who can identify even a few species can contribute to the body of knowledge that is used to inform conservation efforts to protect birds and biodiversity," said Audubon Education VP, Judy Braus. "Families, teachers, children and all those who take part in GBBC get a chance to improve their observation skills, enjoy nature, and have a great time counting for fun, counting for the future." Anyone can take part, from novice bird watchers to experts, by counting birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and reporting their sightings online at www.birdcount.org. Participants can also explore what birds others are finding in their backyards-whether in their own neighborhood or thousands of miles away. Additional online resources include tips to help identify birds, a photo gallery, and special materials for educators. In 2008, participants submitted more than 85,000 checklists. Each year, in addition to entering their tallies, participants submit thousands of digital images for the GBBC photo contest. Many are featured in the popular online gallery. Participants in the 2009 count are also invited to upload their bird videos to YouTube; some will also be featured on the GBBC web site. Visit www.birdcount.org to learn more. Businesses, schools, nature clubs, Scout troops, and other community organizations interested in the GBBC can contact the Cornell Lab of Ornithology at (800) 843-2473 (outside the U.S., call (607) 254-2473), or Audubon at citizenscience@audubon.org or (215) 355-9588, ext 16. The Great Backyard Bird Count is made possible, in part, by support from Wild Birds Unlimited.

Poles Apart : Seabirds of the North and South

A photo collection by Cindy Marple

Southern Fulmar

Wandering Albatross

Northern Fulmar

Snowy Shearwater

Adelie Penguin

Kelp Gull

Common Eider

Black Guillemot

Black-legged Kittiwake

Razorbill

Falkland Steamer Duck

Falkland Skua

Red-throated Loon

Atlantic Puffin

Arctic Tern

Southern Ocean

Aside from a few Islands including the Falklands, there is little land in the Southern Oceans. Many Seabirds come to land only to breed, and are superbly adapted for their harsh environment. Albatrosses are streamlined gliders, taking advantage of the nearly constant winds to cover vast distances in search of food. Penguins, which dive to great depths, have feathers that form a water tight coat, and layers of blubber to keep them warm in the frigid waters.

The Far North

In the North, there are large land masses with seas in between. With ample coastline, many seabirds such as Gulls, Loons, and Sea Ducks, spend time on land or near shore. The Auks are the divers of the North, and fill a similar role in the ecosystem as Penguins in the South. Razorbills, Puffins, Guillemots and Murres are all members of the Auk family.

King Penguins - Gold Harbor, South Georgia

Seabirds North and South

The Arctic and Antarctic regions are home to millions and millions of Seabirds. There are a few closely related species found at the opposite ends of the earth, such as the Great and Antarctic (a.k.a. Brown or Falkland) Skua, and Northern and Southern Fulmars. Penguins, Auks, and most Albatrosses are found only in one hemisphere or the other. One species, the Arctic Tern, migrates between the two regions, a round trip of some 25,000 miles.

Cliffs in Latrabjarg, Iceland

FIELD TRIPS SCHEDULE

Consult the Desert Rivers website for any changes, additions, or cancellations prior to trip dates, and additional information about each trip.

January 10 Saturday, Scottsdale Ponds - led by Harvey Beatty
Once again, Harvey will lead a field trip to the Scottsdale Ponds. These urban ponds have a good assortment of our wintering ducks including mergansers, shorebirds and other waterfowl. Bring a scope if available, and lunch and water. Dress for the weather. Meet at the Chart House restaurant east of Scottsdale Road at McCormick Pkwy; we will leave this area promptly at 7:30 a.m. For reservations contact Charles or Marion Saffell, email marisaff@cox.net, or 480-668-9393

January 24 Saturday, Santa Cruz Flats, led by Claudia Kirscher
Journey with us once again, down to Santa Cruz Flats with Claudia Kirscher. MEETING SITE INFO: We will meet and leave promptly at 6:30 a.m. from the Safeway parking lot, I-10 to Elliott Rd. exit, west to 48th Street, southwest corner. Starbucks is in this store, as well as restrooms. Bring scopes, and handheld radios. There are no stores in the Santa Cruz Flats area, so bring snacks/lunch, lots of water, and carpool \$. This trip will be limited to three cars. Reservations: Charles or Marion Saffell at marisaff@cox.net. or 480 668-9393. See report below of previous trip.

February 13, Friday, Kathie Anderson - see website for details

February 14 Saturday, Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson, led by Claudia Kirscher. We will meet at the Safeway parking lot on Elliott and 48th Street. Meeting time will be 6 a.m. Limit 12 participants. We will plan to bird the wetlands for 2-3 hours with possible side trip to Roger Road Waste Treatment Plant and/or Red Rock Feed Lot (depending on any recent unusual postings on the listserve). We will return by early afternoon. Dress warmly for early morning, bring a lunch and lots of water.

April 11, Saturday, Catalina State Park, near Tucson, led by Kathie Anderson, see website for details

Santa Cruz Flats Field Trip Report - A Great-Horned Owl hooting on a telephone pole at our carpool site was an auspicious beginning for the DRAS Santa Cruz Flats field trip, 12/06/08. The Northern Jacana was quickly found at the Dave White Golf Course, a life bird for many in the group. A Ladder-backed Woodpecker perched out in the sun over groups of Ruddy, Shoveler, and Ringed-neck Ducks. A quick, but enjoyable stop in downtown Casa Grande to ooh and aaah over the feral Monk Parakeets. At Az City, a nice surprise was an adult Bonaparte's Gull keeping company with a Ringed-bill Gull. A Western Grebe and DC Cormorant (immature) floated in the rafts of Ruddy Ducks. Black-necked Stilts basked in the sun. In the Flats, raptor numbers have increased slightly with more male Northern Harriers than females. Another life/state bird for many were four Crested Caracaras in a field with several Red-tailed Hawks of different color morphs. Two Ferruginous Hawks and three Loggerhead Shrikes plumped up the bird list. A Merlin (Taiga) perching on a sprinkler head in nearby sod fields afforded long scope views for all. Burrowing owls hid as we drove by. A Sharp-shinned Hawk flew in spiraling circles overhead allowing nice field mark comparisons with the day's many Cooper's Hawks. We hit the sparrow jackpot at one road corner with Brewer's, Vesper, Song, Savannah, and



Photo - D. Rosenberg

Lincoln. Flocks of Horned Larks swept the fields where Brewer's Blackbirds and Meadowlarks lined the telephone lines. A nice day in the field with a total of 61 species. Thanks to all the sharp-eyed participants and to co-leaders Claudia Kirscher & Anne Peyton.

Change of Hattitude

Joy Dingley

It was my turn to host the Red Hatters Event. For those of you who don't know about Red Hatters it is an organization for women of a certain age, over 50 to be truthful. We don't do anything worthy we just meet once a month to go out and enjoy ourselves. So I didn't arrange a concert, or shopping trip or evening meal. Instead I arranged breakfast at my house followed by a trip to the Scottsdale ponds to do some bird watching. For all the group it was the first time they had been out looking at birds anywhere but their backyard so the gaggle of Canada Geese that landed on the pond just as we got there and the sound and feel of their wing beats overhead was an amazing event for them. The revelation that coots are not ducks, that there were four different species of ducks on the ponds, that herons were that big; all these things were eye-opening wonders to them. Then we had a WOW moment, I noticed a Harris Hawk dragging a dead rabbit out from under an Oleander. I got my scope focused on the bird and stood back to let everyone get a look. Then there was a flurry of wings and another bird was on top of the rabbit. I looked again and a Red Tailed Hawk was disputing the ownership of the corpse. For about 5 minutes they circled each other, wings spread out, presenting their talons, beaks open and we could hear and occasional hiss. Then the Harris left the battle. The Red Tail sat on the rabbit for a while then flew off. We waited but no-one came back for the spoils of war.

I wasn't going to top that so we went off to lunch. I don't think any of the ladies will be taking up serious bird watching but we talked about what they can do in their yards to attract birds and about how wild life adapts to urban living. It has certainly changed their attitude to bird watching and made them more aware of how many more birds share their environment.

Maybe you'd like to take a group of friends out on a similar outing. A few hints at making it a success. We know the best birds are early in the day but choose a spot and a time of year when the non-birder can see a lot at a later hour in the morning. Choose somewhere easily accessible to people who may not want to crawl through mesquite just to see a black capped gnatcatcher. Don't just identify the birds for your guests, tell them how you tell a coot isn't a duck, explain why some ducks dabble and others dive. Tell them how the Abert's Towhee and the Verdin are special to our region. Let anyone who is keen know about our beginner bird walks at Veterans' Oasis or Gilbert Riparian. Consider giving them a gift of the Birds of Phoenix booklet, at just \$1 it's an ideal way to encourage them further.



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 October to December, 2008.



Bass Pro Shops for use of their meeting room for Desert Rivers' Board meetings each month in the Mesa/Phoenix store.



Bashas Supermarkets for sponsorship of the monthly Chandler Family Birdwalks program at Oasis Park in Chandler.



Audubon Arizona for a collaborative funding grant of \$550 for development of the DRAS website, and a \$1000 donation for DRAS' help with the "Gifts from Nature" event held in December.

Charles and Marion Saffell, Founding Members, for a large gift from the Arizona Medical Network Board of Directors - Charles Saffell, President. This is the second large donation to the chapter arranged by the Saffells, and it is greatly appreciated!

EVENTS- JAN. /MAR.09

January 13, Tuesday, General Membership Meeting- The Film, A River Reborn; the Restoration of Fossil Creek. A riveting story of environmental conflict & collaboration & the emergence of a new model for the resolution of environmental disputes. This remarkable film brings to life the natural and human history of Fossil Creek. It examines the ecological effects of a 100-year-old dam and hydroelectric facility and highlights the success of this restoration for people and native species. Presented by Dr. Stefan Sommer, Faculty, Department of Biological Sciences at Northern Arizona University;

January 14, Wednesday, Wings Over Wilcox Birding Festival, Wilcox, AZ
See : www.wingsoverwilcox.com

January 17, Saturday, Gilbert Family Birdwalk

Join us for our monthly Family Birdwalk at the Preserve- one of the premier birding locations in the east valley! Walks begin at 8AM and depart every few minutes in groups of 10-12. Liberty Wildlife is present with 3-5 educational raptors that you and your family can see up close and personal, and learn about them from Liberty Wildlife educators. The event is always free, and we have books and other nature items for sale at our display tent. Loaner binoculars are provided free, and our expert leaders will take you around the seven ponds to see all the bird and other wildlife species that inhabit this facility. This is a great outdoor experience for your family and you!

January 20, Tuesday, DRAS Board Meeting

Everyone is welcome to attend DRAS Board Meetings if they desire. We meet at the Bass Pro Shop at Loop 202 and Dobson Rd at 6:30 once a month, and meetings last 1.5-2 hours. Come opine at a board meeting and then check out the gigantic Bass Pro store- it's amazing and worth the trip! Meeting held upstairs in the back left corner of the store.

February 7, Saturday, Chandler Family Birdwalk

Thanks to a generous grant from **Basha's Supermarkets**, Desert Rivers Audubon is leading our Family Bird Walks on the first Saturdays of the month, October through March, at the new Chandler Environmental Education Center at Veteran's Oasis Park. This new riparian habitat and park is located at the NE corner of Lindsay and Chandler Hts. Rd. Chandler has built a beautiful Center here, which is staffed full time by two Naturalists. Desert Rivers Audubon is proud to be affiliated with this great new habitat. This is a great location to come and take a walk around its beautiful trails, and of course, to watch birds. If interested in this and future bird walk days at the park, contact them directly at 480 782-2886.

February 10, Tuesday, General Membership Meeting Amanda Moor, Biologist
Ever wonder how biologists study nighttime animals such as owls? Come learn some of the techniques used to locate, capture, and monitor Mexican Spotted Owls, as biologist Amanda Moors shares her experience researching the owls in the Catalina mountains and the San Carlos Apache Reservation. In addition to discussing the Mexican Spotted Owl research, Amanda will cover some of the basics of birding on the San Carlos Apache Reservation. This will include information on obtaining permits, great places to find birds as well as an overall description of habitat types and bird species that are found on the Reservation. Join us before meetings for dinner at Joe's BBQ, 301 N. Gilbert Rd. at 5 pm. (Two blocks N. of the RR Tracks).

February 17, Tuesday, DRAS Board Meeting

Everyone is welcome to attend DRAS Board Meetings if they desire. We meet at the Bass Pro Shop at Loop 202 and Dobson Rd at 6:30 once a month, and meetings last 1.5-2 hours. Come opine at a board meeting and then check out the gigantic Bass Pro store- it's amazing and worth the trip! Meeting held upstairs in the back left corner.

February 21, Saturday, Gilbert Family Birdwalk

Join us for our monthly Family Birdwalk at the Preserve- one of the premier birding locations in the east valley! Walks begin at 8AM and depart every few minutes in groups of 10-12. Liberty Wildlife is present with 3-5 educational raptors that you and your family can see up close and personal, and learn about them from Liberty Wildlife educators. The event is always free, and we have books and other nature items for sale at our display tent. Loaner binoculars are provided free, and our expert leaders will take you around the seven ponds.

See the Desert Rivers website for any changes to the events schedule, and for additional information on these and other events and DRAS programs.

February 28, Saturday, Audubon Takes Wing Environmental Summit, Tucson, AZ.

The first Audubon Environmental Summit is scheduled for Feb. 28th at the Arizona Sonoran Desert Museum in Tucson. With the Arizona Audubon Council sponsoring and Tucson Audubon hosting, this summit event will bring together other environmental organizations and Audubon chapters and the Audubon Arizona to identify local environmental issues and begin strategic planning on efforts to remedy those issues. More to come. Watch for article in the December DRAS newsletter, and plan to attend this important event, and see www.tucsonaudubon.org

March 7, Saturday, Chandler Family Birdwalk

Thanks to a generous grant from **Basha's Supermarkets**, Desert Rivers Audubon is leading our Family Bird Walks on the first Saturdays of the month, October through March, at the new Chandler Environmental Education Center at Veteran's Oasis Park. This new riparian habitat and park is located at the NE corner of Lindsay and Chandler Hts. Rd. Chandler has built a beautiful Center here, which is staffed full time by two Naturalists. Desert Rivers Audubon is proud to be affiliated with this great new habitat, and we are glad to be working with the preserve staff. The park us a great addition to the Southeast Valley. This is a great location to come and take a walk around its beautiful trails, and of course, to watch birds. If interested in this and future bird walk days at the park, contact them directly at 480 782-2886.

March 7 & 8, Sat. & Sun. Tres Rios Nature Festival 2009

This year's Tres Rios Nature Festival will be held once again at the Arizona Game and Fish Department's B&M property right next to the PIR racetrack in west Phoenix off Avondale Blvd. See www.tresriosnaturefestival.org

March 10, Tuesday, General Membership Meeting, Troy Corman

Troy is a founder and President of the Arizona Field Ornithologists, and a biologist with the AZ Game & Fish Dept. He also authored the AZ Breeding Bird Atlas. Come learn about "AZFO's" work and mission around the state with an interesting powerpoint presentation. 132 W. Bruce, Gilbert. Join us before meetings for dinner at Joe's BBQ, 301 N. Gilbert Rd. at 5 pm. (Two blocks N. of the RR Tracks).

March 17, Tuesday, DRAS Board Meeting

Everyone is welcome to attend DRAS Board Meetings if they desire. We meet at the Bass Pro Shop at Loop 202 and Dobson Rd at 6:30 once a month, and meetings last 1.5-2 hours. Come opine at a board meeting and then check out the gigantic Bass Pro store- it's amazing and worth the trip! Meeting held upstairs in the back left corner of the store.

March 21, Saturday, Gilbert Family Birdwalks

Join us for our monthly Family Birdwalk at the Preserve- one of the premier birding locations in the east valley! Walks begin at 8AM and depart every few minutes in groups of 10-12. Liberty Wildlife is present with 3-5 educational raptors that you and your family can see up close and personal, and learn about them from Liberty Wildlife educators. The event is always free, and we have books and other nature items for sale at our display tent. Loaner binoculars are provided free, and our expert leaders will take you around the seven ponds.

March 21, Saturday, "Welcome Back Buzzards" Day at Boyce Thompson Arboretum, Superior, AZ.

See : <http://arboretum.ag.arizona.edu/events.html> for details.

March 28, Saturday, Gilbert Feathered Friends Festival

The annual Feathered Friends Festival is a great opportunity to learn about nature with your family, and get acquainted with many environmental and community-service groups in the east valley. There will be live birds, raptors, reptiles, tortoises, mammals, and lots of activities for the kids! Desert Rivers will have it's display booth up and be doing children's activities, and leading free birdwalks around the ponds. Books will be available as well.

April 4, Saturday, Wildflower Festival, Tohono Chul Park, Tucson, AZ 520-742-6455.

<http://www.tohonochohulpark.org/> Date above not verified- watch for new posting soon.

April 4, Saturday, Yuma Nature & Birding Festival

Date to be announced - Date above not verified. Yuma Birding Festival, Yuma, AZ, April, 2009, 800-293-0071

NOTABLE ARIZONA STATE SIGHTINGS



Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), Arizona City Lake, Pinal County.

This Yellow-throated Warbler was discovered by Kurt Rademaker and Josh Watson on November 8 2008 in Arizona City and photographed at the same time by Kurt. It was photographed later by Brendon Grice the same day. Brendon's photos clearly show this bird is of the western

D. d. albiflora race. This race has a white or pale yellow supraloral stripe (the part of the white eyebrow near the bill) whereas the other races of *D. dominica* have bright yellow supraloral stripes. Yellow-throated Warbler is a casual transient in Arizona with a couple of winter and summer records as well. There are 19 previous records in all, but only 2 since 2000. Note the yellow throat, black auriculars with white spot behind them and the white eyeline.

Roseate Spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), Gilbert Water Ranch, Maricopa County. This immature Roseate Spoonbill was first seen by a number of birders, including Richard Catero, Pete Moulton, and Cindy West, as it flew into the Gilbert Water Ranch on the morning of 27 September 2008. These photographs are by Brendon Grice from the same day. This is an



Photo: Brendon Grice

immature because it lacks the red shoulders of an adult. It is a first year bird because of the fully feathered head. Second year birds also lack the red shoulders of adults, but have the bald forehead typical of adults and are usually brighter pink. Adult plumage is acquired in the third year. Although considered a regular visitor to the state through the 1970's, it has been much rarer and less regular since, probably associated with the decline of waterbird habitat in the Colorado River Delta in nearby Mexico. There are about 25 accepted records, including several previous records from Maricopa County.



Photo: Scott Schuette

Least Flycatcher (*Empidonax minimus*), Wellton, Yuma County. This Least Flycatcher was discovered on 03 November 2008 by Rich Hoyer, Dylan Radin and Scott Schuette just outside of Wellton in Yuma County. It was photographed by Scott Schuette on 03 November 2008.

Least Flycatcher is a casual spring and late fall migrant in Arizona with fewer than 10 previous records. This bird was found in the Mohawk Valley in a cottonwood grove a couple miles west of Wellton (the only cottonwood grove along County 10th Street between the Wellton and Dome Valley exits). It was

about in the middle of the cottonwood grove where there is a low spot with a dense patch of cottonwood seedlings. The grove doesn't really have very good access and requires a bit of bushwhacking. The bird was calling and came into pishing and owl imitations. Defining characteristics that separate this bird from Dusky Flycatcher include the head and neck shape, short, thick bill, pale lower mandible, high wing contrast (very wide, bright wing bars with the rest of the wing rather blackish), white throat and vested look, short wings and tail, and straight-sided tail. Its call was a very short, dry, clipped "pit." It reacted quite aggressively when a recording of Least Flycatcher song was played back to it, but as expected this time of year, did not sing back.

White-collared Seedeater (*Sporophila torqueola*), Gilbert Water Ranch, Maricopa County. A White-collared Seedeater was discovered and photographed by Richard Ditch on 03 October 2008 at the Gilbert Water Ranch where the bench overlooks the southern end of Pond 7. It was also photographed a few days later by Brendon Grice and Pierre Deviche. White-collared Seedeater has been reported several times in Arizona but never accepted on to the state list because it is an extremely common cage bird in Mexico and therefore establishing that these are wild birds and not escapes from captivity is difficult.

From the AZ Field Ornithologists. See complete details and **many** more reports on the AZFO website - www.azfo.org - "Documentation" pg.

Wood Thrush (*Hylocichla mustelina*), Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum, Pima County. A Wood Thrush was discovered and photographed by Phillip Kline on 03 November 2008 at the Arizona Sonora Desert Museum outside of Tucson. Wood Thrush is a casual spring and fall migrant to Arizona with fewer than 20 previous records.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*), Carrie Nation Trail, Madera Canyon, Pima County. A Black-throated Green Warbler was discovered and photographed by Scot Pipkin on 07 November 2008 in upper Madera Canyon. The bird was found on the Carrie Nation trail, just below the cutoff to Josephine Saddle trail. Prior to 1990 there were about 30 records of Black-throated Green Warbler for Arizona, but there have only been about 5 records since. This pattern of decreased occurrence since 1990 seems to fit several other northerly breeding eastern warblers that are much less common as vagrants to the state than previously.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*), Madera Canyon, Chuparosa Inn, Santa Cruz County.

This hatch-year Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was observed by Laurens Halsey and George West at the Chuparosa Inn in Madera Canyon on 20 October. This bird alternated with at least one Red-naped Sapsucker at the same Sycamore, feeding at and boring more sap wells (once briefly present at the same time). This bird was photographed by Laurens Halsey on 20 October 2008. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are rare winter visitor to southeast Arizona. Timing of molt is important in identifying juvenile sapsuckers. Most juvenile Red-naped Sapsuckers complete molt before migration, particularly acquiring the adult head pattern and red nape very early, although they may retain juvenile breast feathers into the fall. Juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers take much longer to molt and may not complete molt until early winter. Therefore any mostly juvenile plumaged (particularly brownish headed) sapsuckers this time of year should be Yellow-bellied. In addition, juvenile Red-naped Sapsuckers have a more uniform, dark crown and acquire the red crown in a molt from front to back. Juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers have a more mottled crown and acquire the red randomly across the entire crown. A final clue to identification: the buffy-yellow and brown barring on the back of Red-naped usually forms two rows, this bird shows a fairly uniform pattern across the entire back (not too apparent in these photographs).



Photo: Laurens Halsey

Magnolia Warbler (*Dendroica magnolia*), Cameron Seep, Coconino County. A Magnolia Warbler was discovered and photographed by Brian Gatlin on 07 October 2008 at the Cameron Seep which is along Highway 89 across from the Cameron Trading post on the south side of the Little Colorado River. Casual migrant in Arizona. Close to thirty accepted records in all. According to Chuck LaRue, this is the 5th record for the Navajo-Hopi Reservation and the first there in 19 years.

Black-throated Green Warbler (*Dendroica virens*), Sweetwater Wetlands, Pima County

This male Black-throated Green Warbler was discovered by Will Russell on 29 November 2008 at the Sweetwater Wetlands and photographed by Judy Ulreich and Paul Watson the same day. One was also seen at this location last year on 4 November 2007. Prior to 1990 there were about 30 records for Arizona, but it has been much scarcer since with only about a half dozen records. This pattern of decreased occurrence since 1990 seems to fit several other northerly breeding eastern warblers that are much less common as vagrants to the state than previously. In all plumages the wash of yellow across the vent just behind the legs is diagnostic for Black-throated Green Warbler, although it is not always as obvious as it is on this individual.



Photo: Paul Watson

American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*), Tweedy Road, Santa Cruz Flats, Pinal County. An American Golden-Plover was discovered and photographed by Allen and Denise Klaiber on 24 October 2008 along Tweedy Road in the Santa Cruz Flats area. American Golden-Plover is a casual fall transient.

Editor's Note: The AZFO website currently has 151 rare species listed on their "Photo Documentation" page from 2008 alone! See this page and several other excellent pages to understand the occurrence of uncommon and rare bird species throughout AZ.

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

First documented observation of Common Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*) in Arizona

Pierre Deviche (deviche@asu.edu)

Michael Moore (Michael.moore@asu.edu)

On the morning of 2 March 2008, Phoenix birders Pierre Deviche and Dany Pierard-Deviche discovered and photographed (Figure 1) an adult male teal swimming on Pond 7 of the Gilbert Water Ranch Riparian Preserve in Gilbert, Maricopa County, Arizona. The teal had the plumage characteristics of a typical Eurasian Green-winged Teal (*Anas crecca crecca*), also known as Common Teal, Eurasian Teal or Teal. These characteristics included a strong horizontal white scapular stripe, pale lines outlining the green patch on the head, and no trace of a vertical white breast bar. Many male American Green-winged Teal (*A. c. carolinensis*), the form commonly encountered in winter and migration throughout the state, were also present, thus permitting direct comparison. This observation corresponds to the time when Green-winged Teal numbers at the Water Ranch were at a seasonal maximum (M.C. Moore, unpubl. obs. but see data on www.ebird.org). Thus, it is likely that this bird was migrating through with other Green-winged Teal, although it did not directly associate or behaviorally interact with them.

Later in the day the bird was found again by other birders including M. C. Moore, L. Hatcher, and J. Burns. Moore observed the bird through his scope and obtained digiscoped pictures, thus providing further documentation (Figure 2). In addition to the plumage characters that Deviche noted, Moore was able to see the coarser vermiculations of the sides in direct comparison with nearby American Green-winged Teal. The Common Teal swam back and forth repeatedly across about 75 meters of the pond, kept somewhat to itself, and was actively feeding over the entire hour of observation. Despite efforts by Moore and others over the next several days, the bird was not found again. The only previous sight report of Common Teal in Arizona was of a male at Picacho Reservoir, Pinal County on 18 January 1953 (Johnson, Margolin, and Simpson in Phillips et al. 1964, Monson and Phillips 1981), but this bird was neither photographed nor collected. Therefore, if accepted by the Arizona Bird Committee, the Gilbert observation will constitute the first documented state record of this form.



Figure 1: Adult male Common Teal, Gilbert Water Ranch Riparian Preserve in Gilbert, Maricopa Co., Arizona, 2 March 2008. Even on this distant bird, note the conspicuousness of the horizontal lateral stripe and face pattern, and the lack of apparent vertical white breast band. Photos by Pierre Deviche.



Figure 2: Adult male Common Teal, Gilbert Water Ranch Riparian Preserve in Gilbert, Maricopa Co., Arizona, 2 March 2008. Photo by Michael Moore. This picture shows the coarser vermiculations on the sides.

The taxonomy of birds in the *Anas crecca/carolinensis* complex is unsettled (Livezey 1991). Behavioral, morphological, and molecular genetic

studies (Johnson and Sorenson 1999, Sangster et al. 2002) suggest that this complex consists of two species: Green-winged Teal (*A. carolinensis*) and Common Teal (*A. crecca*). Consistent with this view, most countries outside North America grant full species status to Green-winged and Common Teal. However, North American authorities (American Ornithologists' Union (AOU) and American Bird Association

FIRST AZ SIGHTING OF COMMON TEAL IN AZ

(ABA) currently group these forms in one species (*Anas crecca*) that includes three subspecies (Johnson 1995): Green-winged Teal (*A. c. carolinensis*) in N. America; Common Teal (*A. c. crecca*) in Eurasia; and Aleutian Green-winged Teal (*A. c. nimia*) in the Aleutian Islands (see Webster 2006 for further discussion).

Given the above taxonomic confusion the question naturally arises: Is Common Teal countable separately from American Green-winged Teal? Most North American birders follow the ABA rules for listing. According to these rules, the answer to the above question depends on the list. For the areas covered by the ABA or the AOU checklists, Common Teal is currently considered a subspecies of Green-winged Teal and is not countable for lists contained within those areas. However, for world lists, the authority for ABA listing is Clements et al. (2007) who consider Common Teal as a separate species. Therefore, a Common Teal seen in North America would not be countable on your ABA area list or your Arizona list, but would be countable on your world list! Female Green-winged and Common Teal, as well as immature males and males in eclipse of these subspecies, are difficult to separate visually (Cramp et al. 1977, Millington 1998, Sibley 2000), but adult males in alternate plumage normally show conspicuous differences as summarized by Gillson (2004; Figures 1-3):

- White scapular stripe. The inner web of the lower scapular wing feathers in Common Teal is white. In a bird at rest this web forms a bright horizontal white bar that extends laterally from the shoulder to the tail. In contrast, this inner web in Green-winged Teal is brownish gray, and this subspecies, therefore, never displays a horizontal lateral white stripe.

- Vertical white breast bar. Green-winged Teal has a vertical white bar along the side of the breast. This bar is absent in Common Teal.

- Pale facial lines. The bill of Common Teal is outlined by bold pale lines that extend to the forehead. This subspecies also shows a pale line under the eye that continues posteriorly to clearly delineate the ventral border of the green ear patch. These lines in Green-winged Teal are thinner and subdued, creating a less strongly patterned head than that of Common Teal.

Additional features - head and breast color, body size, and side vermiculations (Cramp et al. 1977, Gillson 2004) - separate Green-winged and Common Teal, but are more subtle than the above characters and, therefore, generally difficult to assess in the field unless birds of the two subspecies are seen concurrently, at close range, and under similar light conditions. Overall, however, based on the above main differences, field observers should have no difficulty separating typical adult male Green-winged and Common Teal in alternate plumage. It is noted that hybrids with intermediate characteristics do occur (Gillson 2004). Hybrids often have both white stripes (usually reduced in size and brightness) but can even have the pattern of an American Green-winged Teal on one side and a Common Teal on the other side. Only adult males showing all the above characteristics and lacking any trace of the vertical breast bar can be safely identified as Common Teal. The Gilbert Water Ranch individual had a conspicuous horizontal white stripe, no trace of a vertical white breast bar, and a strongly marked head pattern (Figures 1 and 2), and thus showed no overt sign of hybrid origin.

Figure 3: Adult male Green-winged Teal, Gilbert Water Ranch Riparian Preserve in Gilbert, Maricopa Co., Arizona, 10 February 2008. In contrast to the male depicted in Figure 2, this duck shows a conspicuous vertical breast band but no horizontal scapular stripe, and the white face pattern is subdued. Photo by Pierre Deviche.

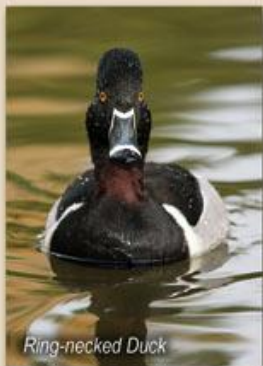


Common Teal are rare but somewhat regular along both the North American Pacific and Atlantic coasts. Records away from these coasts are rare and include eastern Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Texas, New Mexico, and Ohio (Edwards 1932, Hamilton et al. 2007, Harris and Gerstenberg 1968, Sibley 2000, Gillson 2004, Barnes 2008, Sturts 2008, Sandy Williams, pers. communication; <http://www.texasbirds.org/tbr/gwteal.htm>). Comprehensive information on the geographic and temporal occurrences of this subspecies in North

Continued on page 13

The Family Album

Subfamily Anatinae, tribes Aythiini, Mergini, Oxyurini
Article and Photos: Cindy Marple



Ring-necked Duck

Ducks That Dive



Surf Scoter

Hooded Merganser

True Ducks are often classified in two groups that are described by their dominant feeding method. There are Dabblers, which feed on the surface or just under it by upending themselves with the tail pointed straight up. The other group is Diving Ducks, which fully submerge themselves while foraging. Worldwide, the 100 or so species of True Ducks are about evenly split between these groups, but in North America, Diving species outnumber Dabblers by nearly 2 to 1. The Phoenix area is a haven for ducks in the winter time and more than half of the North American species can be found here with modest effort.

It is easy enough to place a duck in its group when you see it feeding, but there are some other things you can look for to distinguish a Diving Duck that isn't diving. Divers are less buoyant than Dabblers and tend to ride lower in the water, with less of the body exposed, as with the Ring-necked Duck seen above. Like Loons and Grebes, which also feed by diving, the legs are set far back on the body to enable underwater propulsion. You can see how far back the red leg of the Surf Scoter is. But this leg position makes them awkward on land and you will not often see a Diver on land.

As with other diving birds, Diving Ducks have more difficulty becoming airborne than their Dabbling cousins which can pretty much lift straight off the water. If you see a duck running across the water to take flight, such as the Female Hooded Merganser above, odds are it is a Diver.

Photo Tip: If you find a duck actively diving and want to capture an image of the start of the dive, watch the bird's head. Immediately prior to a dive, the duck will noticeably flatten the feathers on the top of the head, compressing the air out. Within 2 to 3 seconds (usually) the bird will give a quick look and



Ruddy Duck

Bufflehead

start its dive. Take a succession of images at the fastest frame rate your camera allows as soon as you see movement because the action is over quickly. If you press the button when you see the "perfect" pose you'll be too late!

Editor's Note: In early 2009 Cindy Marple and/or Mike Rupp will be giving an avian photography class at the Desert Botanical Gardens. Check their website at: www.dbg.org for details and reservation information. This is a great opportunity to learn about this subject and perhaps improve your photography skills.

OCTOBER DRAS MEETING NOTE

Over 70 folks attended the October DRAS General Meeting which featured Liberty Wildlife's annual raptor presentation. DRAS members who work with Liberty - Claudia Kirscher, Ann Peyton, and Craig Fischer regaled everyone with the life histories and behaviours of both a Black and Turkey Vulture, an American Kestrel, Merlin, and a Golden Eagle. The kids in attendance especially enjoyed seeing these raptors up close.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Desert Rivers metal logo pins are now available at all of our activities and meetings for those who like to wear these on jackets and hats. Cost is \$5.00 for members. They are beautifully produced with an enamel finish in the Desert Rivers colors. Can't wait for one? Call Krys Hammers at 480-413-9805 to have one sent by mail. Size: 1.25 inch diameter



COMMON TEAL PAPER CONTINUED

America is difficult to obtain. Common Teal was considered a separate species by the AOU until it was lumped with Green-winged Teal in 1973. Because Common and Green-winged Teal are not currently recognized as separate species by U.S. authorities, they are not treated separately by most states' bird committees; exceptions are Oregon (Gillson 2004) and Arizona. However, since this form may someday be considered a separate species again in North America and because identification of males is straightforward, it is worth looking for and should be documented when found. Common Teal is on the Arizona Bird Committee's official review list and the Arizona Bird Committee is always open to evaluating any especially rare forms and out-of-range birds beyond those on the official review list.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are indebted to Narca Moore-Craig, Troy Corman and Kurt Rademaker for assistance and constructive suggestions on earlier versions of this paper.

LITERATURE CITED - can be found on the AZFO website due to space restrictions.

COOP OR SHIN? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

reliable and easily observed differences.

Tail Shape—Shins have square-tipped tails, Coops rounded. True if you have a bird in hand and fairly reliable on birds in flight, but to me it's always been of little help on perched birds because of molt and posture issues. Shin tails will appear somewhat rounded when spread.

Tail Pattern—Another highly advertised diagnostic, Shin tails supposedly have a narrow white terminal band, Coops a broad one. Don't believe the advertising. This field mark varies greatly with angle of view, angle of light, and molt progression.

Using these eleven field characteristics, look closely and critically at every accipiter you see. Try, but don't feel obligated, to identify every one. And if you find an incontrovertible adult Shin, let me know. I have yet to see one in the Valley.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Lori Lehman
Michael Clinton
Susan Arandjelovic
Eric Wadleigh
Diana Stuart
Ron Sell

Bobbie Howard
Vivienne Torgeson
Jeanne Wellwerts
Skip & Peggy Carney
Pat Lawson
Phyllis Bofferding
John Hill & Linda Sheppard

Marilyn & Jim Hazel
Donald & Shirley Maas
Ann Dessert
Lesa Thomas
Jeanne Burns
Liz Anderson

KIDS PAGE



These drawings were done by various classes at the Skyline Elementary K-8 School in Queen Creek, under the direction Estelle Fosnight. Her art classes studied John James Audubon, and bird drawing skills. We picked those drawings that showed good perception of bird's colors and plumage patterns, but all of the drawings submitted were terrific! Classes can submit material to the Kids Page by contacting joy.dingley@cox.net

Word Search

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

Other wildlife you can see while birdwatching

ANTS, BADGER, BAT, BEES, BOBCAT
BUTTERFLY, CHIPMUNK, COYOTE
DRAGONFLIES, FISH, FROG, JAVELINA
LIZARD, MOTH, MUSKRAT, PRAIRIEDOG
RABBIT, SCORPION, SNAKE, SPIDER



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

[http://www.audubon.org/educate/
kids/](http://www.audubon.org/educate/kids/)



www.desertriversaudubon.org

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

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION
U S Postage
PAID
Phoenix, AZ
Permit No. 1003

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings are held at the new Gilbert 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.

DESERT RIVERS BOARD MEMBERS

President.....	Mike Rupp	mikerupp@cox.net
Vice President.....	Carl Matthusen	carl.matthusen@riomail.maricopa.edu
Secretary.....	Jan Stamm	janst68@aol.com
Treasurer.....	Janice Miano	egret@cox.net
Membership Director.....	Krys Hammers	krys.hammers@cox.net
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
Development Director.....	vacant	mikerupp@cox.net
Conservation Director.....	Don Farmer	huntnhabit@msn.com
Volunteer Director.....	Marion Saffell	marisaff@cox.net
Hospitality Chair.....	Evelyn Lewis	evinarizona@yahoo.com

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

Newsletter Editor and Design : Michael Rupp, mikerupp@cox.net
Contributing Photographer/writer: Cindy Marple, clmarple@cox.net
Contributing Photographer/writer : Jim Burns, jpbaztec@aol.com
Printing : Can-Do Printers

