



DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 3 WINTER 2010 NEWSLETTER



Cedar Waxwing feeding on Dessert
Olive berries - Jim Burns

In This Issue :

- Audubon at Home Column
- Fall Migration article
- Birding Bosque del Apache
- Common Raven article
- Ten Tips for Bird Photography
- "Fall Colors" article- Jim Burns
- Notable Arizona Sightings
- Christmas Bird Count information
- The Family Album
- The Kids Page

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Krys Hammers

AUDUBON AT HOME

Krys Hammers

Backyard Habitat Program

As we return from our summer travels or emerge from our summer hibernation, we embark on another Desert Rivers Audubon season. Your board has been hard at work this summer to bring you a great year of birding, programs, education and events. New this year is the Bird Habitat program. This is our way to promote and recognize those who keep "healthy desert habitats" in their yards, businesses, parks or schoolyards to attract and support birds and wildlife. Watch for our workshop on building a habitat to attract birds.

We have long offered Beginning Birding classes. Coming this winter is the Intermediate Birding class taught by Cindy West. This will be offered at the Environmental Education Center at Veterans Oasis Park, Chandler and cover more in depth discussions of bird life and behavior, as well as challenging bird identification.

New this year is the Mike Rupp Photo-journalism Scholarship. Submissions will be nature-themed articles with photographs, suitable to be published in our newsletter. Not only do we honor Mike Rupp, whose excellence in this field has made our newsletter and promotional materials the high caliber that they are today, but we help a young person pursue an education in environmental sciences. If you'd like to donate for this scholarship, please go online or see any Board member. Be sure to specify that you want your donation to go directly to this scholarship.

You will notice that the Board is quite different than when we left in the spring. We've had some departures, some additions and some people shuffled to different positions. Ultimately, I think we have a very talented, dedicated group of leaders for our chapter. They are in positions to leverage their best abilities with the needs of the chapter. I couldn't be more proud of each and every one of them. We do still have the two vacant positions. If you would like to try out a leadership role in the chapter, please talk to any Board member about it. We also need some volunteers to serve on our Nominating Committee, as we have several long-serving members who will leave the Board at the end of the year.

So we look forward to a great year of engaging programs, diverse field trips, interesting newsletters, opportunities for us to grow our own knowledge and opportunities for us to share our knowledge and passion of the natural world.



Turn Garbage to Gold



The gold of course is rich garden compost, which will help your vegetables or landscape plants thrive. The most obvious advantage to composting is the nutrients that are added to the soils when you add compost, but it can also enhance pest control and eliminate diseases in plants. Of particular importance in our desert, it helps soils retain moisture longer. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it can even help to clean up contaminated soils. It has additional benefit of diverting organic solid waste from landfills, where it can contribute to production of methane, a greenhouse gas and acidic leachate.

Most cities, including Chandler, Gilbert and Mesa can help you get started with composting. They may offer classes with all necessary information to get you started. They will also deliver a compost bin to your house. Mesa charges \$5 refundable deposit for the bin. You can also buy bins in yard and garden stores. The fancier models have mechanisms to help you turn the compost pile.

The concept is simple - you add green and brown organic matter, dampen it and turn it over and before long you have compost. The Greens provide nitrogen. This waste would include green yard clippings, fruits and vegetables, coffee grounds and filters and breads and grains. The Browns provide the carbon. They would include sawdust, straw, shredded paper, dried yard clippings, nut shells, egg shells, dryer and vacuum cleaner lint. You do not want to add plastics, dairy products, Meat scraps, oil or lard, pet waste, yard clippings that have been treated with pesticides, weeds, glass or metal. You should have about 4 parts browns to every part of greens.

The pile needs air and moisture. Most of the bins have ventilation holes and you will need to aerate the pile by turning the contents every week or every time you add to it. You will need to dampen the pile to keep it moist. The pile will actually generate warmth as the materials decompose. In the summer, it may be necessary to keep the pile in a shaded or partially-shaded area.

Your compost is ready when the material is dark brown and crumbly. You can sift your compost to get a finer soil additive. If you find any materials that haven't decomposed completely, you can add them to your new pile. Your plants and garden will thank you and you can feel good about reducing your need for fertilizers and pesticides, as well as helping to reduce greenhouse gases.

Fall Migration

Article : Michael Rupp

By the time you read this newsletter, Fall migration will be fully underway and two of our local species, the **Turkey Vulture** and **Swainson's Hawk**, will have left the valley for southern habitats. The illustration below, taken from *The Atlas of Bird Migration*, shows the routes and breeding grounds of these two species and the times of migration. In the Spring, the vulture can be found in good numbers in the Santa Cruz Flats area mentioned on page 12.

Although some **Turkey Vultures** winter over in the valley, many migrate southward. The Turkey Vulture's relatively heavy wings, and its habit of nesting later than its southern cousin the Black Vulture, may be adaptations that allow it to migrate farther. Thousands of "TuVus" are funneled through Central America, at times accompanied by Swainson's and other hawks. TuVus are strong fliers, passing through Middle America on their north and southbound journeys like clockwork.

Their return migration is so punctual that festivals are held at various towns, including the Boyce Thompson Arboretum in Superior, Arizona to celebrate the "return of the buzzards" each March.

Thermal soaring is an effective method of migration for TuVus, using hot warm thermals to gain a few thousand feet of altitude, then converting that height to distance by gliding.



Swainson's Hawks typically migrate in huge flocks and travel farther than any other North American hawks. These "plains" birds spend summers in NA grasslands and winters in the pampas of Argentina. This hawk and several others are monitored each year at the thinnest point of land in Panama and number in the hundreds of thousands, necessitating counting blocks of sky as they pass by. Daily totals can be as high as 40,000 birds a day during peak weeks.

Bosque del Apache

Article & Photos
Cindy Marple

It's before sunrise, and you're standing at the edge of a pond listening to the incessant chatter of Snow Geese. As the sun begins to peek over the horizon, the chatter suddenly, briefly stops, only to be replaced by the roar of wings as thousands of geese lift into the air simultaneously. Wave after wave of geese fly right over your head, calling loudly as they go. This is one of the spectacles of the birding world, and it takes place near to us in New Mexico, at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge.

The refuge is in the Rio Grande Valley, south of Albuquerque. It is managed as a winter home for nearly 15,000 Rocky Mountain Sandhill Cranes, which is more than half of the population. But plenty of other birds besides the geese and cranes can be found here, some in very large numbers. In the winter, there are many other species of waterfowl, Black-birds, Crows, Sparrows and Herons. This is also a great place to see several species of Raptors. There are often Bald Eagles hanging out in the large snags in the main ponds, especially later in the season. Northern Harriers, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned and Red-tailed Hawks and Kestrels are common sights. A few shorebirds can be found in the edges of the ponds. I've had Snipe almost walk across my feet! Roadrunners pose on the fence posts at the refuge entrance, and Gambel's Quail can be found in the gardens of the Visitor Center. American Goldfinches, Pine Siskin, and in some years Mountain Bluebirds forage in big weed patches.

Winter is the most popular time to visit, but at other times the refuge can also be good for shorebirds, warblers and other migrant species.

In addition to the birds, you are likely to see the resident Mule Deer browsing through the fields, and Coyote routinely stalk the perimeter of the fields and ponds looking for an easy meal. Other small mammals may be seen less frequently, including Muskrat and Porcupine, along with a variety of rodents.

About the refuge:

The main access to the refuge is a gravel road. The 15 mile, (primarily) one-way loop is split into two shorter loops by a two-way road at the mid-point. The southern loop is the Marsh Loop and the northern is the Farm Loop, with habitats matching the names. There are viewing platforms along both loops and some trails which may be walked. There is a nice boardwalk at the southern end of the Marsh Loop. Drive slowly along the roads and stop along the side whenever you find something interesting. Birds are fairly used to cars so they make a good blind from which to view more skittish species. The Visitor Center has feeders and an indoor viewing area, as well as gardens which host different species than you may find along the tour loops. The hot coffee and hot chocolate available there can be most welcome on cold mornings.

Typically, you will start the day at the Flight Deck on the western side of the Farm Loop road, or anywhere along that section of road, for the dawn Fly-out. Throughout the day, the geese and cranes will fly in and out of the corn fields and ponds of the Farm Loop. At sunset, they will come back to the main pond. There are also a few ponds along Highway 1 just north of the Visitor Center where the cranes roost overnight which are good locations for the sunset fly-in, and cranes flying out in the morning after the geese have left the main pond.

For the cranes and geese, plan a visit between mid-November and mid-February; most visit in November-December, when it is warmer. The annual Festival of the Cranes takes place the weekend before Thanksgiving. For more information on the Festival, go to <http://www.friendsofthebosque.org/crane/>. From the East Valley, you can take the US 60 East all the way to the town of Socorro. Then take I25 South 8 miles to the San Antonio Exit and follow the signs another 10 or so miles south to the refuge. It's a scenic drive but could have snow at the higher elevations in winter. Alternatively, you can take I10 East to Las Cruces and then take I25 north to the San Antonio Exit. Entrance fee is \$5 per day per car. There is an RV park just outside the refuge called the Birder's RV Park. In the town of Socorro, there are several lodging choices as well as restaurants. If you want to get lunch during your day at the refuge without going all the way back to Socorro, stop at the Owl Bar and Café on the corner in San Antonio for a New Mexican treat, the Green Chile Cheeseburger! In the winter, temperatures at dawn are likely to be sub-freezing. Dress very warmly since you'll be standing in one place for some time waiting for the fly-out. Layers are best though, as it warms up quickly and you can be comfortable in shirt sleeves in the afternoon.



The Common Raven Nevermore!

Jerry Lang, PhD
Photos: Cindy Marple



Raven intelligence and adaptability have always held a certain mystery for the human mind revealed in cultural attitudes toward these birds. On one hand, these large black corvids are associated with death, doom, and evil spirits. On the other hand, they represent creation, healing, protection and prophecy. Their playfulness has also led to their characterization as trickster – especially in Native American traditions.

Corvids are considered some of the most intelligent birds. Ravens, crows, and magpies have the largest hyperstriatum (forebrain area) of any bird species. This area of the brain is somewhat comparable to the cerebral cortex in mammals. A more complex brain leads to more complex behaviors characteristic of ravens. Experiments have shown that ravens can problem solve and use tools to obtain food. Observers have seen ravens in the wild lead wolves to potential prey and to even “play” with wolves. Ravens also seem to “enjoy” themselves when engaging in aerial acrobatics, rolling down a snowy embankment, or passing stones to each other with their beaks. Also, the birds often work together to gain access to food using tactics of distraction, harassment, and ambush.

Ravens are opportunistic omnivores, which sometimes create problems in their interactions with humans. Farmers have long persecuted ravens for ravaging corn and other crops. The birds reportedly occasionally attack newborn livestock, and trappers have complained of ravens damaging the fur of trapped animals. Ravens’ ability to find and feed on eggs and nestlings of endangered species such as desert tortoises and California condors has also created problems.

Recent genetic studies on ravens show interesting differences among North American populations reflecting changing conditions over millions of years. Genes of common ravens in California’s Mojave desert and elsewhere in the western US indicate that California ravens form a different clade (have a different common ancestor) from the ravens found further east and north in North America. Ravens in places like Minnesota, Maine, and Alaska have more in common genetically with European and Old World raven populations than they do with California clade ravens. However California clade ravens and Holarctic (common) clade ravens interbreed over large portions of the

western US – so they are not technically different species.

Researchers speculate that the California clade of common raven was isolated from the Holarctic clade during ancient glaciations of North America. Another theory is that the Holarctic clade may just be a later arrival from the Old World that crossed the Bering land bridge with the first Native Americans. The Chihuahuan raven, whose distribution includes southeastern Arizona, is recognized as an entirely separate species (*C. cryptoleucus*), but it is genetically related to the California clade of common raven. The Chihuahuan raven is somewhat smaller, has a brownish tinge to its coloration, and has difficult-to-see white feather bases on neck and breast that show only when ruffled (hence *cryptoleucus*, from the Latin for “hidden white”). It’s also more insectivorous and less of a carrion eater than the common raven. It breeds rather late (May) compared to the common raven (February or March). This is probably as an adaptation linked to the Chihuahuan raven’s higher dependence on insects as food.

All three of these genetically related ravens are found in Arizona where the Mojave, Sonoran, and Chihuahuan deserts meet. Of course, there is no way to differentiate between California clade and Holarctic clade (or hybrid) birds in the field, and even Chihuahuan ravens are not strikingly different from their near cousins, the common raven.

Besides sometimes being shot and poisoned by angry farmers, ravens have had other challenges to their survival. Ravens, along with other corvids, have been hit hard with West Nile virus. However, populations are rebounding in many areas. In fact, reports from the Canadian provinces show they may be rebounding too much.

In the end, there is nothing “common” about the common raven. Whether seen as bearers of doom, farm pests, or caterers to the prophet Elijah hiding out in caves, these intelligent birds have made their mark on the human psyche. Smart, adaptable, and able to get themselves into trouble – sort of like us!



TEN BEST PHOTO TIPS

Interested in avian photography? Here's advice from two of the best bird photographers in the state- Cindy Marple, who's images have graced these pages from the start, and Bruce Taubert, from AZ Game & Fish. Both have traveled extensively and are well-known image-makers.

Birds make excellent photo subjects, but as anyone who has tried it knows, they are tough subjects to photograph well. Whether your goal is to document your sightings or to create beautiful imagery, here are some techniques to help you improve your bird photos.



1 Use a long lens.

It goes without saying that magnifying optics are needed when it comes to studying detail in birds. For taking pictures, this translates to using a long lens, meaning 300mm or longer- that is, if you want a picture where the bird is actually big enough to be recognizable! Although some point and shoot cameras are in this range, most bird photographers use a Digital SLR (DSLR) camera and lens. But there are many lenses that go to 300mm or more, which one is right for you? Zoom lenses in the 70-300mm or 100-400mm range are versatile and light weight and are good choices for a casual bird photographer. The downside is they can be frustratingly slow to lock focus on a fast moving subject. Fixed 300mm f/4 or 400mm f/5.6 lenses offer better speed and are still light weight and portable, making them ideal bird lenses. Generally though, they are pricier. At the far end of the spectrum are the Super Telephoto lenses of 500, 600 or even 800mm. They are expensive and heavy, but they are the lenses of choice for most professional and serious amateur bird photographers because of their speed and magnification.

You can get more reach out of your lens by using a DSLR camera that has a 1.4 to 1.6X "Crop Factor"; the lens focal length is effectively multiplied by the crop factor. With some lenses, you can also use tele-extendors- small optics that mount between the camera and lens and multiply the focal length of the lens by 1.4 to 2 X.



2 Keep the camera steady.

Long lenses that magnify your subject will also, unfortunately, magnify any movement of the camera and lens. What happens when the camera moves? A blurred bird, or "blurd". How do you keep the camera from moving? The best way is to put the camera on a tripod. However, tripods are slow, especially when you are trying to follow a fast moving subject. I've missed the best shots while fiddling with the tripod! A monopod can be a good alternative to improve your mobility, although it is not as stable so you have to take more care to avoid camera movement. Hand-holding is the least desirable method but sometimes you have no choice. Your body must then be the stable platform, so put one hand under the lens barrel, keep your elbows tucked in, and stay as steady as you can. In all cases it helps to press your face in to the camera body, hold your breath, and press the shutter button VERY LIGHTLY to keep that camera still.



Bruce Taubert

"Fixed 300mm f/4 or 400mm f/5.6 lenses offer better speed and are still light weight and portable, making them ideal bird lenses."



Bruce Taubert



Bruce Taubert



Bruce Taubert

"Do a little scouting and find out where the birds are most concentrated that is within your cameras 'good photo' distance".



3 Read your camera manual

Like any complicated piece of electronic equipment a modern day camera takes a lot of skill to operate. If you try to take photographs of birds without knowing how to best operate your camera it is like trying to drive a Porsche in a road race after owning a Toyota Camry for the last 20 years- you may crash before you get to the finish line. Do you know how to add or subtract light? Can you autofocus on a flying bird? Are you comfortable with changing the focus point? If not read your camera manual and you will be closer to becoming a great bird photographer.



4 Go where birds are used to people.

Probably the best method to get close to birds is to find a place where they congregate and are not afraid of people. Gilbert Water Ranch, Bosque del Apache, lots of boardwalks in Florida, coastal areas during migration, are a few examples of such locations. The key is to go to locations where the birds are used to lots of commotion and will be "comfortable" with your presence. Do a little scouting and find out where the birds are most concentrated that is within your cameras "good photo distance". Images of birds that take up less than 25% of the image, for the most part, are too far away for quality photographs. If you can get close enough so that the bird covers about 1/3 of your field of view you are in good location to take a wonderful photo. Next, get there early in the morning (before or at sunrise) or about 3 hours before dark. Find a comfortable place and sit QUIET AND AS CONCEALED AS POSSIBLE. Wait at least one hour before you give up and change locations. If you have done your scouting and the birds were there the day before they will probably return.



5 Use a blind

The second "best" method to get close to birds is to use some sort of hide or blind. Like a small tent the photographer gets into the blind, closes the entry point, and takes photos through "port holes" in the material. If you have a favorite place where you know that birds will be you can make a blind out of wood or some more permanent material. During the dry months (April, May, June, October, November) set up your blind near a water hole. If you are in a good place for abundant birds they will come to water each day. Put a few branches or other perches near the water hole for the bird to fly to so that you can get a photo of them before the birds get on the ground. Birds would rather land on a branch before getting on the ground. Although permanent blinds work well for some situations we prefer portable blinds that can go where ever you do. One mechanism of getting birds close to your blind is to feed them. Feeding wildlife in general is a touchy subject. In Maricopa and Pima Counties it is illegal to feed wildlife other than birds and squirrels. This law was written so that good meaning people will not attract coyotes, bears, mountain lions, bobcats, and the like. If predators get used to "free food" they will lose their fear of people and may become dangerous. Buy quail blocks, good quality bird seed, or try using half oranges or grape jelly. Keep your feeding area clean and remember if you attract large numbers of small birds you may, inadvertently, also make a perfect place for hawks to get their food. There are many types of hunting/photo blinds available commercially. Try Cabellas, Sportsmans Warehouse, or the internet to find one that is within your price range and comfortable for you. In the desert heat it is important to make or purchase a blind that has good ventilation. However you get close enough to birds remember that good photos take time. If we get a few decent photos each day it is a great day. Most good photos take several days to make.

Wait for behavior.

When you do get birds close enough for a photo put your eye up to the view finder and wait. Be still and quiet. Take a few shots when the bird gets close so that you at least have a nice portrait. Then wait for some action. Once the birds get relaxed they will be feeding, preening, defending their territory or conducting some other sort of behavior. The best photographs are taken when an animal is moving or doing something interesting-not just sitting there. Spend time observing behaviors, paying attention to patterns. You may be able to pick up cues that tell you what will come next, that help you to be prepared to get the shot. For example, diving ducks flatten the feathers on top of the head just before they dive. Knowing this increases your chance to capture the dive itself.

7 Point your shadow at the bird

Have you ever had trouble identifying a bird when the sun is coming from behind it? Tough to do because you can't see color or detail very well. Photographers refer to this situation as back light. You can get some very artistic photos such as a nice silhouette with sunrise or sunset colors, using back light. However it is difficult or impossible to get any detail in the bird in this kind of light, so you need to avoid photographing with back light if you aren't going for an artistic interpretation.

Most of the time, you want to get maximum color and detail in your subject. This means you want front light, with sun coming over your shoulder and falling directly on the subject. You know you have front light if your shadow is pointing at (or near) the bird. If the light is coming more from the side, that can be ok too, but then you'll want to pay particular attention to the bird's face and wait for it to turn so that the face is well lit and not in the dark shadow.

The other aspect of light to be aware of when photographing is the color of the light. The color of sunlight changes throughout the day. At sunrise and sunset, sunlight has a warm, yellow to reddish color that photographers love. We call these times of day Magic Hour and arrange our photo sessions around it. As the sun gets higher in the sky, the color becomes more neutral or bluer, which will give you more accurate colors in your avian subjects if your aim is documentation. High altitude can also shift the color of sunlight to an even bluer cast. And if you visit that tropical rainforest for the magnificent bird life, be aware that the light can take on a greenish cast as it filters through the leaves. Fortunately with digital images, it is relatively easy to apply color correction in the computer to get rid of undesired color casts.



Shoot from the subject's eye level.

Birds are found at all heights- from down on the ground to soaring in the sky. From a photographic standpoint, the more intimate photos are made from the subject's eye level, where you get a stronger connection with the subject. Obviously it isn't always possible, but with birds that are down low, get off your feet and make that connection. A gardening kneel pad can make shooting from a sitting or kneeling position more comfortable. The real die-hards get all the way down to a prone position, but your back has to allow you to do that! With birds high in the tree tops, sometimes you can get yourself higher on a hillside or embankment to get more even with them. Otherwise, try getting back further and using a longer lens, which reduces the angle at which you are shooting and gives an appearance of being at the same level. When those options aren't possible, take the "insurance shot" at the steep angle and wait to see if the subject will move down to a lower level. For soaring birds there isn't much of a choice, unless you happen to be at a mountain or cliff side where they are soaring below you!

Continued on Page 9



Rufous-backed Robin eating Pyracantha berries at Boyce Thompson Arboretum

Some families of birds evoke certain seasons of the year, no matter what part of the country is in the conversation. Warblers are springtime, period. Other families are associated with specific seasons in specific regions. Bluebirds are summer in the Midwest, shorebirds are fall on the California coast, owls are winter in our northern tier of states. Autumn in Arizona? For me autumn in Arizona is thrushes.

If this isn't the family that comes to mind for you, allow me to digress for a moment and prompt a seasonal/color association followed by a seasonal/scenic association. Winter is white, spring is green, summer is blue or yellow. Got it? Alright, now what color is fall? Sure, fall is earth tones. Browns, amber, gold, some subdued reds. If winter is barren, snowy fields, spring burgeoning plant growth, and summer field crops and meadows of wildflowers, what's your visual of autumn? A "harvest" moon, changing leaves, and ripening fruit on berry trees and bushes, right?

What this has to do with thrushes in my mind is that Arizona's thrushes breed in our mountains and then migrate altitudinally down into our foothills and deserts as their high country food supplies wane with the daylight hours and the end of growing season. They bring with them the browns and russets and burnt oranges of their plumage to match the colors of our fall foliage, the drying plant life, and those ripening berries which attract them.

Think Western Bluebird with its orange breast, Townsend's Solitaire flashing buffy wing linings, Hermit Thrush arrayed in brown tones highlighted by its reddish tail, maybe even an out of state vagrant Varied Thrush sporting an orange supercilium to match its throat and breast, and of course American Robin, the original "red breast." Picture those colors and how well they match the season, both plumage and foliage all different hues and shades of a color well known to birders—rufous. Not drab but subdued, the colors of autumn. Now remember the most sought and celebrated, and probably the most colorful, of this family in Arizona, always eagerly anticipated as the leaves turn and the berries ripen and the October moon waxes. Feeding on Pyracantha or Hackberry or foraging through leaf litter so blended with its plumage you can be looking right at it and miss it. Rufous-backed Robin!

Thrushes show up in fall when and where there are fruiting trees, but other birds congregate around these natural feeding stations as well. The most attractive berries for the frugivorous species seem to be Hackberry, Pyracantha, Russian and Desert Olive, Myrtle, Wolfberry, Pistachio, Pomegranate, Guayacan, and don't forget the dates everywhere in the Valley this time of year. The silky flycatchers—Phainopepla and Cedar Waxwings—and the warblers—Yellow-rumpeds and Orange-crowneds—may be the most conspicuous non-residents, but the local starlings, verdins, thrashers, and sparrows are also waiting in line for these autumn staples.



Hermit Thrush eating Pyracantha berries

*Background : Sandhill Cranes against the moon
European Starling eating Palm Tree seeds*



Fall fruit is widespread throughout the Phoenix metro area, but no place in central Arizona has more fruiting trees, both native and exotic, than Boyce-Thompson Arboretum State Park (BTA), an hour east of the Valley on U.S. 60, just west of the town of Superior.

Because the Main Trail at BTA lies along a deep canyon cut by Queen Creek and encompasses a wide variety of microhabitats from open and warm upland foothills to shaded and cool riparian bottoms, its fruit trees continue to bear in a progression throughout the season from mid-October to mid-winter.

BTA is as famous for its cultural events and garden exhibits as for its well documented birdlife. It is most heavily visited between October and May, and its most celebrated visitor is Rufous-backed Robin, a vagrant from Mexico almost annual over the last decade. For many Valley birders who keep state lists or year lists, nothing marks the turn of the seasons from summer to fall like beginning the search for Rufous-backed Robin, and this treasure hunt starts with discovering where the berries are in a given year, typically at BTA, but perhaps at Oak Flat or in your neighborhood wash. One autumn a Rufous-backed turned up in a backyard in Ahwatukee.

Other places to check for fall fruit and the birds it attracts are Thunderbird Conservation Park, the Nature Conservancy's Hassayampa River Preserve, White Tank Mountain Regional Park, Granite Reef Recreation Area, Mesquite Wash along AZ 87 (the Beeline Highway), Seven Springs Recreation Area, the Desert Botanical Garden, Papago Park, and the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch. Directions for these fall hotspots can be found in Mike Rupp's nifty little guidebook, Guide to 101 Birding Sites, Phoenix, available from the Desert Rivers bookstore.

There are other families of birds, of course, whose members migrate through or come this time of year and stay the winter because of abundant food supplies that have nothing at all to do with the fruits of fall. Migrant Rufous Hummingbirds peak in early September, but a few linger until winter around residential feeders. Sandhill Cranes begin arriving in October at the Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area in southern Arizona's Sulphur Springs Valley, and nothing evokes autumn in the West and Midwest like the rolling bugle of a flock of Sandhills across a full moon as they return to their watery overnight roosts after spending the day in nearby grain fields.

Often overlooked is yet another fall and winter food source that attracts a very different family of birds altogether. Those who put out seed feeders or have a water feature in the yard will notice an influx of doves, sparrows, and goldfinches this time of year. The doves and small passerines are themselves the primary food source for raptors, occasionally Harris's Hawks and Red-tails, but always for the accipiters, Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks, which are found in large numbers throughout the Valley in fall and winter, most typically on surveillance around feeding stations which concentrate their prey. All four of these urban hunters, particularly in their adult plumages, mock the soft, subdued reds of autumn.

Autumn is a great time of year to be in the field in Arizona. September's stifling humidity is gone, temperatures are perfect, and shorter daylight hours mean the birds will be out feeding longer. Find their food sources and just sit for awhile, amidst the subtle colors of the season, observing the matching plumage and various lifestyles of Arizona's thrushes, silky flycatchers, warblers, and raptors as they go about their daily business of trying to survive.

Editor's Note : In Jim Burns' article "Summertime Blues" in the Summer issue of this newsletter, the Editor incorrectly labeled the Pinyon Jay photo as a Mountain Bluebird, and the Varied Bunting as a Painted Bunting. It has been corrected online, and my apologies to Jim Burns for these errors.

Fall Colors

Article & Photos : Jim Burns

Sharp-shinned Hawk



Rufous Hummingbird



Western Bluebirds in Pyracantha

EVENTS & FIELD TRIPS

OCT.-NOV.-DEC. 2010

CHECK DRAS WEBSITE FOR ADDITIONAL TRIPS

To reserve a spot on any of these trips contact
Susie Vaught at azvaughts_2@msn.com
or 480-898-7564

FIELD TRIP-PAYSON AREA, led by Kathe Anderson

Fri, October 8, 5:45am - 2:30pm

We'll leave Fountain Hills about 5:45am to arrive in Payson about 6:45. We'll explore ponds and parks. Wrap up about 1:30pm, to return to Fountain Hills about 2:30. No entrance fees at this time. Limited to 8 people. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net, or Susie Vaught,

FIELD TRIP-SUNFLOWER, led by Richard Kaiser

Sat, October 9, 7am - 3pm

We will travel north on the Beeline Highway (State Route 87) to bird the desert area at the turnoffs called Mesquite Wash, and Sycamore Creek, the latter which includes driving and walking along the paved road that used to be a portion of the highway.

FIELD TRIP- GLENDALE RECHARGE PONDS led by Claudia Kirscher

Saturday, Oct 23,

Join Claudia Kirscher once again, as she leads a trip to the Glendale Recharge Ponds. SRP Glendale Recharge Ponds are becoming a reliable area to spot migrating shorebirds. Allow 3 hours to complete the loops around the ponds. A scope is helpful. Bring water and light snack. Meeting time TBA.

FIELD TRIP-GRANITE REEF DAM/LOWER SALT RIVER, led by

Charles Saffell Sat, October 30, 7:30am - 12:00pm

Charles will once again lead us to his favorite birding spots along the Salt River, leading up to Saguaro Lake. We'll meet at 7:30 a.m., and carpool from the Walgreens on the SE Corner of McKellips and Power Road in East Mesa. Each auto going will need a Forest Service pass, \$6 per day per car, or \$3 for Seniors, when bought in advance.

FIELD TRIP-Rt.60, OFF THE BEATEN PATH, led by Kathe Anderson

Fri, November 12, 6:15am - 1:00pm

We'll leave Gilbert about 6:15am to head straight to Oak Flat, a few miles beyond Superior, then work our way back, skipping the birding hot spot of the Boyce Thompson Arboretum! Other stops will include Queen Valley and probably the "Electric Park" in Mesa. Expect to return to Gilbert about 1pm. No entrance fees at this time. Limited to 8 people. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net, or Susie Vaught.

FIELD TRIP-TEMPE TOWN LAKE-led by Kathe Anderson

Mon, December 6, 7:30am - 9:00am

This will be a short trip, just to start the week off right! We'll meet at 7:30am at Tempe Town Lake (exact meeting place to be decided) and wrap up by 9, hoping to see waders and waterfowl, and the usual osprey in action, plus whatever might be popping around in the reeds and trees. Limited to 8 people. Bring lots of water, snacks, wear a hat, comfy walking shoes or boots, and sunscreen. Please register with Kathe Anderson at kathe.coot@cox.net or Susie Vaught.

FIELD TRIP-SANTA CRUZ FLATS, led by Claudia Kirscher

Sunday, Dec 12,

Journey with us once again, down to Santa Cruz Flats with Claudia Kirscher. Probable stops along the way will be Casa Grande Dave White Golf Course, downtown CG for monk parakeets, and Arizona City to scope the lake for wintering waterbirds and the occasional rarities that drop into farm areas. Contact Field Trip Director Susie Vaught, azvaughts_2@msn.com; or 480 898-7564 Departure details to be announced.

TEN BEST PHOTO TIPS

Continued

Use the Rule of Thirds

It is tempting to put your subject in the middle of the frame, where it's easiest to get the autofocus sensor on target and keep the bird in the frame. Although there isn't anything wrong with doing this, the result may be a static, boring composition with space around the bird that doesn't contribute to the overall image. Artists have long used the Rule of Thirds to guide where they place their subjects, and this works in photographs too. Think of a tic-tac-toe grid overlaying your frame. The four points at which the lines intersect are called the Power Points. These points are where you want to place your subject. If the bird is large in the frame it is the place you want to put the head or eyes. You can also use the entire line at the 1/3 point as a guide of where to place a larger object, say a tree, or a horizon. Putting your subject off-center like this gives a more dynamic feel to the photo. If the bird is moving, you want to give it some room to move into, so place it so there is more room in front of the bird and less behind it.



Pay attention to the background.

It is easy to get so completely engaged with your subject that you don't notice what is around it. This is how we end up with pictures of birds with big branches covering the body or lost in the leaves or with bits of 4 other ducks in the background. Although it is good to include some habitat in the image, you don't want the bird to be lost in it. Of course, first take that insurance shot, and then work to get a better image. If the bird is moving around and tolerant of you, try to follow it in the viewfinder, waiting for it to land in a good, open spot in the branch. If you're making a set up at a blind, look carefully at the background where you have placed the perch to insure it is free of bright spots and clutter. Birds that hunt from perches often return to the same spots, giving you a chance to move around a little bit to find an angle that has a simpler background. Or you may be able to move a step left or right to avoid a stick running through the background with a perched bird. With shorebirds and waterfowl, wait for them to move through some areas where water or shoreline has pretty reflections or simple colors, without weeds or dirt poking through. Patience is the key to getting nice backgrounds, as well as being aware of the surroundings and looking for the spots that are going to be better than others before you set up.



Cindy Marple

Taking pictures of birds is not that difficult. Getting good quality, attractive images of birds takes a bit more time, effort, patience, practice, and some luck. Spending some extra time getting close to your subject, thinking about the composition, and paying attention to the light, will help you to achieve better results. Don't be afraid to take a lot of photos, with digital it's easy to delete the ones where the bird blinked or the tail tip got cut off, and keep the best of the lot. Most importantly, it's a great way to get yourself out into the field, studying and spending time with a subject you love!

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

NOTABLE ARIZONA STATE SIGHTINGS



Hybrid Bullock's X Baltimore Oriole (*Icterus bullockii* X *I. gabula*), Paradise, Cochise County. This hybrid Bullock's X Baltimore Oriole was identified by Judy Engelmann and photographed by Jackie Lewis on 09 May 2010 at a part-time home behind the George Walker House in

Paradise. Populations of Bullock's and Baltimore Orioles first came into contact following the conversion of the Great Plains to agriculture and the consequent planting of trees which allowed Baltimore's to spread west and Bullock's to spread east. As often happens when closely related species first come into contact, hybrids were initially very common. This caused the two species to be lumped for a while as "Northern Oriole." However, these hybrids were less fit and birds that tended to hybridize had lower reproductive success and were soon eliminated from the population by natural selection.

Berylline Hummingbirds (*Amazilia beryllina*), Madera Canyon, Pima County. These Berylline Hummingbirds were discovered and photographed by Laurens Halsey at the Madera Kubo Gift shop. The female was first seen on 21 May 2010 and was photographed on 3 June 2010. Berylline Hummingbird is a rare but increasing summer visitor to the mountains of SE Arizona. It has bred. Green hummingbird with diagnostic rufous wing panels. Male with green throat, female with gray throat.



Yellow-throated Warbler (*Dendroica dominica*), Fool Hollow Lake State Park, Navajo County. This Yellow-throated Warbler was discovered and photographed by Mark Sharon on 11 June 2010. This appears to be a first county record and only the third record for Northern Arizona. Statewide, Yellow-throated Warbler is a casual transient in Arizona

with about 20 previous records. From 2000-2008 there had only been a couple of records but this is the fifth documented report since November 2008, so perhaps this species is increasing in the state? In its breeding range, Yellow-throated Warbler is a very early migrant, one of the first breeding warblers to arrive.

Painted Bunting (*Passerina ciris*), backyard, Cochise County. This male Painted Bunting was discovered and photographed by Brian Prescott on 08 August 2010 at his feeder. Rare early fall transient, casual after early October. While the pattern of migrants in Arizona suggests that fall migrants are wild birds, Painted Bunting is a common cage bird in Mexico and it is impossible to know if birds outside the usual dates are escapes or not.



Brant (*Branta bernicla*), Long Lake, east of Show Low, AZ, Navajo County. A Brant was discovered and photographed by Justin Streit on 20 April 2010. Brant is usually strictly coastal and confined to salt water. It is very rare in Arizona with only 12 previous documented reports. It has only been reported twice in the state in the last decade (2005, 2008) before this year. However, there have been three reports this year alone, the other two in Tucson and at the Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge.

Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher (*Myiodynastes luteiventris*), Cibola National Wildlife Refuge, Cibola, AZ, La Paz County. A Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher was discovered and photographed by Lindsey Smith on 30 June 2010. Not a species that wanders much out of its normal range in SE Arizona, this is an apparent first record for La Paz County.

White-eared Hummingbird (*Hylocharis leucotis*), Flagstaff, Coconino County. This White-eared Hummingbird was discovered by Sandra Clark on 21 June 2010 coming to her backyard feeder and was photographed by her on 22 June 2010. A rare bird even where it normally occurs in SE Arizona, this is apparently a first record for Coconino County and only the state second record away from SE Arizona (one previously near Springer-ville in 2005 in Apache County).



Yellow Grosbeak (*Pheucticus chrysops*), Stateline Road east of Portal - 2 miles north of Portal Road, Cochise County. This Yellow Grosbeak was discovered and photographed by Melvin Moe on 05 June 2010. Yellow Grosbeak is a casual summer visitor to SE Arizona with around 20 records, most of those in June. It is a frequent "one day wonder" and rarely remains in the same area for long. Bright yellow body, black and white wings and huge bill make male Yellow Grosbeaks nearly unmistakable.

Kentucky Warbler (*Oporornis formosus*), Hassayampa River Preserve, Maricopa County. This Kentucky Warbler was mist netted and banded at the Hassayampa River Preserve by Anne Webster-Leight and was photographed by Cody Burkett on 14 August 2010. Kentucky Warbler is a rare transient with most records from the spring. It is very rare in Maricopa County. This is also apparently the second Kentucky Warbler banded at Hassayampa River Preserve.



Tricolored Heron (*Egretta tricolor*), Paloma Ranch, Maricopa County, AZ. This immature Tricolored Heron was discovered and photographed by Bill Grossi on 03 September 2010. Tricolored Heron is a casual visitor to Arizona, most often in summer. This bird represents at least the third documented report for Arizona in 2010.

Brown Booby (*Sula leucogaster*), Martinez Lake, Yuma County. This Brown Booby was discovered and photographed by Gary Froehlich on 10 August 2010. "I discovered a sub-adult Brown Booby at Martinez Lake, near Yuma Proving Ground, north of Yuma, AZ. It was sitting in the shade near a shed or out-building." There are only 9 previous records of this species, 7 from the Lower Colorado River Valley including one present at Martinez Lake from Sep 1958 to Oct 1960. The most recent previous state record was in 1991 near Hillside.



White-eyed Vireo (*Vireo griseus*), San Pedro River at Dudleyville, Pinal County. A White-eyed Vireo was discovered and photographed by Jack Holloway on 18 June 2010. Considered a casual visitor to Arizona, with no apparent pattern of seasonal occurrence or distribution in the state. There are about 20 previous records. Light iris, bright yellow lores and spectacles, white wingbars, yellowish sides and flanks

2010-2011 Christmas Bird Count Information

Article : 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.

The Count List 2010-2011

The Arizona Christmas Bird Count map (below) includes a couple of nearby counts in New Mexico and Mexico. Count # corresponds to number on CBC Location map. For complete list details see : www.azfo.org or az.audubon.org



PHOENIX AREA CBC DESCRIPTIONS

Carefree Christmas Bird Count. This count circle is centered three miles north of the SkyRanch at Carefree Airport. The count includes the towns of Carefree and Cave Creek as well as the north end of the City of Scottsdale. This upland desert count is situated in northeast Maricopa County and it was organized in 1992.

The largest drainages are Cave Creek and Camp Creek, both of which are flowing streams in their northerly reaches near Seven Springs. The Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, Cave Creek Regional Park and several Desert Foothills Land Trust preserves are found here, and roughly 40 percent of the circle lies within the Tonto National Forest. Elevations range from approximately 1800-5000 feet. This count typically records about 100 species. Call compiler for information.

Gila River Christmas Bird Count. The Gila River circle is centered three miles east of Powers Butte and about the same distance south of Palo Verde. The count encompasses unincorporated Arlington and Palo Verde as well as part of the Town of Buckeye. This western Maricopa County count dates from 1981.

The Gila River winds through the middle of the count circle and provides excellent birding habitat. The Hassayampa River empties into the Gila upstream from Powers Butte. An added feature is the presence of the Robbins Butte Wildlife Area. Elevations range from approximately 700-1900 feet. This count typically records about 140 species. Call compiler for information.

Hassayampa River Christmas Bird Count. This northwest Maricopa County count reaches into Yavapai County as well. The count circle is centered five miles northeast of Wickenburg on Constellation Road. There is considerable public land here and little urban development; the only significant population center is the Town of Wickenburg. This upland desert count has been held annually since 1989.

The Hassayampa River affords good birding opportunities, especially south of town at the Hassayampa River Preserve. This property is owned and managed by The Nature Conservancy. The Hassayampa River Canyon Wilderness can be birded as well. Elevations range from approximately 2000-4400 feet. This count typically records about 100 species. Call compiler for information.

Phoenix-Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count. The center of this count circle lies about one mile south of the confluence of the Gila and Agua Fria rivers in central Maricopa County. Portions of the City of Avondale and the City of Goodyear are included. The count was held continuously from 1954-1984 during which time it was known as the Phoenix Christmas Bird Count. The count was reinstated in 2001.

This count takes the second part of its name from the three major rivers found here—the Gila, the Salt and the Agua Fria. Excellent birding is available along the rivers as well as at the Estrella Mountain Regional Park, Tres Rios Wetlands, Buckeye canals and Jackie Meck Lake. Elevations range from approximately 900-3200 feet. This count typically records about 140 species. Call compiler for information.

Salt-Verde Rivers Christmas Bird Count. This count circle is centered at Adams Mesa in eastern Maricopa County. The count encompasses the Town of Fountain Hills and portions of the City of Mesa, Fort McDowell Yavapai Indian Nation, Phon D. Sutton Rec. Area, and Saguaro Lake. The first count was held in 1950, followed by a second count in 1954 and annual counts since 1985.

The Verde River empties into the Salt River here and the mature riparian habitat along both waterways appeals to a wide range of birds. Public lands include the Tonto National Forest, McDowell Mountain Regional Park and Utery Mountain Regional Park. Elevations range from approximately 1200-4000 feet. This count typically records about 140 species. Call compiler for information or see the Salt Verde CBC Website at

<http://www.mexicobirding.com/AZbirds/CBC/>



AZFO Migration Counts

Ed. Note : These two bird census programs offered by the Arizona Field Ornithologists are offered to the DRAS membership as an opportunity to assist AZFO and increase your birding skills. Contact either compiler to reserve a spot on the next count(s).

Photos : Cindy Marple

Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic Bird Survey

It has long been noted that wintering aquatic birds concentrate in large numbers in several highly urban water sources in the Phoenix metropolitan area. The greater Phoenix area is one of the fastest growing regions of the United States and each year additional lakes and ponds are created in new residential neighborhoods and golf courses throughout the area attracting even more wintering aquatic birds. To clarify, aquatic birds are noted as wild waterfowl, cormorants, grebes, coots, rails, egrets, herons, bitterns, shorebirds and several fish-eating birds such as **Bald Eagles**, **Ospreys**, and **Belted Kingfishers**.

It became apparent during the past few years that only a small sampling of these urban water bodies are regularly visited by birders and fewer still are included in local Christmas Bird Count circles to document annual numbers. As part of the implementation of the recently established and evolving Arizona Coordinated Bird Monitoring Program sponsored by the Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative, a preliminary survey of some key urban areas was conducted by seven surveyors on 21 January 2006 (see summary of data and effort). Even with this limited effort, it was determined that this extensive urban area likely held the highest density of wintering aquatic birds than any place else of its size in Arizona. These encouraging findings led to nearly full coverage surveys of the metro Phoenix area by 52 surveyors (mostly volunteers) on 20 January 2007. These results will not only assist in monitoring annual winter populations, but will also determine high concentration areas for certain species which may lead to identifying potential urban conflict areas. These include urban fishing areas stocked with fish and turf damage and soiling caused by grazing species on golf courses and in parks.

This survey is an annual event on the third Saturday of January.

If you are interested in participating in the Phoenix Area Urban Aquatic Bird Survey, contact Survey Coordinator Troy Corman tcorman@azgfd.gov



Species	Sect 1	Sect 2	Sect 3	Total
Black Vulture				3
Turkey Vulture			9	21
White-tailed Kite				1
Northern Harrier				1
Sharp-shinned Hawk		2		6
Cooper's Hawk			43	126
Harris Hawk		30		6
Red-tailed Hawk		4		8
Golden Eagle		2		3
Screech Owl			1	9
Great Horned Owl		2		
Florida Scrub Jay				
Kridel's				
Fuertes				

Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Count

Many hawk species winter in southern Arizona, some in relatively large numbers, augmenting resident populations. Santa Cruz Flats in Pinal County is particularly noteworthy for drawing these winter visitors. Located along the basin of the Santa Cruz River, which flows northwest across the county towards the Gila River, the area encompasses approximately 350 square miles and has an average elevation of 1,700 feet. It is primarily agricultural, and fields of cotton, alfalfa, corn, and sorghum, laced with irrigation ditches, share the area with two large sod farms, several pecan and pistachio groves, a dairy farm, and a couple of cattle feedlots. Abundant rodents, thousands of wintering sparrows, and a big population of doves offer a ready food supply for raptors.

Crested Caracaras, first reported from this area in January 2001, appear to be increasing. Although the numbers observed in the winter are higher than other seasons, they have been seen year-round suggesting possible nesting in the area. A resident population of **Black Vultures** is found in the area, although at this point its nesting sites and total numbers are apparently unknown. Generally, larger groups are seen in the winter. **Turkey Vultures**, while common in summer and very numerous during migration, are unusual in the winter. Raptors not yet seen on the count, but observed within a few weeks of the count day include: **Golden Eagle** (24-27 January 2009) and **Northern Saw-whet Owl** (28 December 2007).

Birders often visit this area in the winter to look for raptors as well as non-raptors such as thrashers, **Mountain Plovers**, and **Mountain Bluebirds**, but no systematic count of raptors had ever been made before and no part of the area is in a Christmas Bird Count circle. However, annually assessing the number of raptors wintering in this area is useful for judging population trends and migratory patterns. It's with this in mind that on 21 January 2006 nine birders, organized into three teams, conducted the first tally of raptors in the area. Since then the count has become an annual activity held on the third Saturday of January.

Some predawn owling was begun in the third year of the count. The area covered by the survey is bounded on the south by the Pinal County-Pima County line and on the west by Trekell Road to Battaglia Road and then jogs west to Chuichu Road. The northern boundary runs along Shedd Road from Chuichu Road to Wheeler Road then jogs south to run along Baumgartner Road from Wheeler Road through a line extending from Baumgartner to I-10. The eastern boundary is Wheeler Road from Shedd Road to Baumgartner and then a diagonal line along I-10 (from where it would intersect with Baumgartner if the latter were extended east) to the Pima County line.

Naturally, such a count is approximate; some areas away from roads are not reached, and it's possible that a few birds are counted twice. But as the data for the wintering raptor population accumulates, we are hoping long-range trends will be clearer.

For more information, please contact the survey coordinator, Doug Jenness, d_jenness@hotmail.com.

Last year's raptor count results can be seen at http://www.azfo.org/namc/Raptor_Counts_Pinal.html

The Family Album

Family : Small Finches (Genus *Carduelis*)

Article and Photos: Cindy Marple

The *Carduelis* finches are the smallest of the North American finches, and include the Goldfinches, Siskin and Redpolls. Worldwide there are more than 30 species in this genus, including two common European species, the European Goldfinch and Greenfinch. Most are Northern Hemisphere natives, with a few South American species.



Lesser Goldfinch



Common Redpoll



Common Redpoll



American Goldfinch

Finches have a typical seed-eater bill; that is, stout and conical. They are mainly vegetarian, even in the breeding season. Unlike Sparrows and other seed-eaters, they rarely forage on the ground for seed, preferring to take their food directly off the plant. The little Finches are particularly acrobatic when it comes to climbing around seed heads on grass stalks or other seed-bearing plants, often hanging upside down as they work to extract their meal. Thistle seed is a particular favorite, as anyone with backyard feeders knows! Highly social, they form feeding flocks which can be quite large. They can range widely in search of food and are notably irruptive in wintertime. For example, Pine Siskins are common in higher areas around our state in some years and absent in others.



Pine Siskin



American Goldfinch

Lawrence's Goldfinch

Finches are highly vocal, which can be helpful to birders in both locating and identifying them. Each species has a different flight call, and they call regularly in flight. Males sing long, complicated songs, which may incorporate imitations of other species. Other small streaky birds like sparrows have much shorter and simpler songs, so this may be a useful clue in identification.

All Finches are sexually dimorphic. The birds pictured here are all males. The male American Goldfinch is the only North American species that exhibits markedly different plumage in the breeding season; the bird pictured here is in non-breeding plumage.



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 July through September, 2010.



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

Bashas' Supermarkets support of the Chandler Family Birdwalks has enabled us to continue to increase participants and develop this wonderful event.

Bashas'

Wild Birds Unlimited - David Covey and MaryAnne Kenefic for their donations of great raffle items at our monthly meetings. Please visit their store for your birding/nature needs at : NE Corner of Baseline and Gilbert Roads in Mesa.

Corporate Members : Salt River Project, Arizona Cactus Sales, (www.arizonacactusales.com), Bashas', Bass Pro Shops, Wild Birds Unlimited, Arizona Medical Network

New Members

Nellie McWilliams
Mary Jo Won
Brigita Fody Landerstrom family

Maxine Lowler
Felicia French

Norma Walsh
Barbara Tingom
Larry Phelps

When you're looking at a bird and identifying it, you know to look at things like size, shape, and color of the bird. You can also look at *where the bird is*, to get some more clues about the identity. Many birds have a preferred habitat where they can find their favorite food. Observing the habitat can help you make the right identification.

In this quiz, 3 out of the 4 birds in each group like a similar habitat and one likes a different habitat. Can you name each bird, and then which *doesn't* belong with the group? Try it without the hints to make it a more challenging quiz!

Group One



Group Two



Answers:

Group 1: Neotropic Cormorant, Green-winged Teal; Ruddy Duck, Pied-billed Grebe

The Green-winged Teal is the odd bird, it likes shallow water, the others all prefer deep water.

Group 2: Red-naped Sapsucker, Black Phoebe, Ladder-backed Woodpecker, White-breasted Nuthatch.

The Black Phoebe doesn't belong with the others, which all prefer the tree-trunk or sturdy main limbs. Black Phoebe will perch on a small branch at the edge of the tree.

Group 3: Gambel's Quail, Northern Mockingbird, Greater Roadrunner, Green-tailed Towhee.

The Mockingbird doesn't belong with the others who find most of their food on the ground. Mockingbird may find some food on the ground but it spends more time in the bushes or trees.

Group 4: Hermit Thrush, Cactus Wren, Abert's Towhee, Verdin. *Hermit Thrush doesn't belong with the others who all like the desert.*

KIDS PAGE

Hints:

Group 1: How deep is the water?

Group 2: What part of the tree does the bird like?

Group 3: Do these birds like to be up high or down low?

Group 4: Which birds like the desert?

Group Three



Group Four



Address Service Requested

MONTHLY MEETINGS

Meetings are held at the Gilbert Community Center in Gilbert, at 130 N. Oak Street on second Tuesdays at 7 to 9PM, September through May. Doors open at 6:30PM, and everyone is welcome. The center is 2 blocks north of Elliot Rd and two blocks west of Gilbert Rd, near "downtown" Gilbert. See the DRAS website under "Events" heading for listing of topics and speakers. Refreshments provided.

GILBERT / CHANDLER BIRDWALKS

The Gilbert Family Birdwalks are held every **third** Saturday, September through April, at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve on the southeast corner of Greenfield and Guadalupe Rds, Gilbert, at 8AM. The Chandler Family Birdwalks are on the **first** Saturdays, same months, at 4050 E. Chandler Heights Rd in Chandler. Binoculars provided, walks are free. See DRAS website for complete details.

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. In your web browser, go to : <http://listserv.arizona.edu/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=birdwg05&A=1>

Follow the instructions to subscribe and receive daily emails.

DESERT RIVERS BOARD MEMBERS

President.....	Krys Hammers	krys.hammers@cox.net
Vice President.....	vacant	
Secretary.....	Nancy Eichorst	nmeich@cox.net
Treasurer.....	Fran Thurber	fwthurber@cox.net
Membership Director.....	Pat Lawson	catbird_94558@yahoo.com
Public Relations Dir.....	Krys Hammers	krys.hammers@cox.net
Field Trips Director.....	Susie Vaught	azvaughts_2@msn.com
Education Director.....	Joy Dingley	joy.dingley@cox.net
Programs Director.....	Marilyn Reiling	marilyn36@cox.net
Development Director....	Kim Aranda	kjaranda@aol.com
Conservation Director....	Mike Evans	maskatce@cox.net
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, event priorities, and discounts on products and services.

Students / Seniors (65+) Membership	\$20.
Individual Membership.....	\$25.
Senior Couples Membership.....	\$35.
Family Membership.....	\$40.
Corporate Membership.....	\$300+

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 Krys Hammers at krys.hammers@cox.net

Newsletter Editor and Design : Michael Rupp, mikerupp6@gmail.com
Contributing Photographer/Writer : Cindy Marple, clmarple@cox.net
Contributing Photographer/Writer : Jim Burns, jpbaztec@aol.com
Printing : Arrington Graphics