



DESERT RIVERS AUDUBON SOCIETY

VOLUME 4 - SUMMER 2011 NEWSLETTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Krys Hammers,

AUDUBON AT HOME

Eileen Kane,
DRAS Communications Director

Summer News from DRAS

We've reached the summer season again in the desert. The winter visitors have returned north and they've taken the Yellow-rumped Warblers and the Northern Pintails with them. The desert rats are left to scramble for air-conditioning whenever possible. It's the season for Desert Rivers to take a breath and start to plan our activities, events and programs for the next season. The Board will have its annual planning retreat on July 30. If you have any suggestions for things that we should do, things that we shouldn't do, or things that we should do differently, please tell any of the Board members, who are listed on the back page of this newsletter. We welcome and value your input!

On the agenda will be a new project for which we have been awarded a Together Green grant. We will partner with Wild at Heart to create over 100 burrows to be the new homes for relocated Burrowing Owls at Zanjero Park in Gilbert. We will have a volunteer work day in October to create the burrows. The owls will be relocated later in the year and we'll need volunteers for that part of the project too. We're still looking for additional funding sources for such things as fencing to protect the owls before they are released and signage in the park. Look for more information in the announcements and at the fall meetings. This should be a fun and rewarding project and we're honored to have the opportunity to be involved.

At the top of our wish list while we're looking for funding is an equipment trailer. Then we can store all of our tents, tables, books and equipment without having to unload it and load it again for every event. We've been fortunate that the Saffells have provided the storage space and have been loading and unloading the equipment before and after every event, but this is a very time-consuming and laborious task for them.

We're also still trying to raise funds to update the Guide to 101 Birding Sites for the Phoenix Area. We are looking into the possibility of turning it into an "App." It would be much easier to always keep it current and useful as an App. We are also looking for funding to augment our education programs. We need more children's binoculars and to add to our "bone box," a collection of replica skulls, talons, and eggs from various bird species. So many needs - So little funding. If you know of any grant opportunities or funding sources, please let us know.



Cindy Margie

We'll also be planning a Bird Habitat tour of the backyards and parks that we've recognized as being maintained in such a way as to provide a suitable habitat for birds and wildlife. This is tentatively planned for October 22. Please save the date. We hope to demonstrate how keeping our outdoor spaces attractive to birds and wildlife can also

be water-effective, as well as lush and colorful - even in the desert.

While our Volunteer Coordinator position is vacant, we will still have lots of volunteer opportunities next season. We have the Burrowing Owl project, the Hummingbird Habitat, and of course our signature activity - our monthly bird-walks at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve and Veterans Oasis Park. We will offer a training session in the fall for volunteers who want to help with our education programs for children and adults. Please give some thought to becoming a volunteer.

So rest up and try to stay cool through the summer and be ready for lots of great activities in the fall.



Michael Rupp

When Liberty Wildlife brought three Great Horned Owls to our March monthly meeting, they also highlighted their orphaned owl fostering program where injured or lost owl chicks are given to the disabled adult owls at Liberty Wildlife to raise until released back into the wilds of metro Phoenix.

Great Horned Owls are especially talented at using hollows and crevices created by other birds, animals and people. The drying, drooping fronds of our landscape palms are a particular favorite of our local Great Horned Owls and here's where the problems start.

A recurring issue adding to the numbers of very young owls being brought to wildlife rehabilitators is palm pruning. Specifically, the early spring pruning of palms in our residential and municipal landscapes is detrimental to nesting owls. If homeowners and landscapers would just delay pruning palms by two to three weeks, young owls would have a better chance to fledge and move out of their improvised palm nests.

In fact, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at the University of Arizona advises that over pruning of palms can lead to wind-breaks. The process of pruning can also damage palm trunks-leaving them vulnerable to disease and insects-a situation aggravated by over pruning.

Fan palms should not be trimmed until the fronds are completely dried out and ready to fall. Date palms should not be trimmed until June or July. Only brown and yellow leaves or spent flower stalks should be removed. Palms damaged by frost should only be pruned after the danger of frost is past, typically late March or April.

The Arizona Association of Landscape Contractors emphasizes Sustainable Landscape Management, asserting best practices for quality results and avoiding the over pruning resulting in orphaned and injured owls.

At our September 13, 2011 meeting, Greg Clark of Wild at Heart and a partner with the Town of Gilbert in our Together Green project building a burrowing owl habitat at Zanjero Park, will discuss both private landscapes as well as public land suitable for owl habitat.

Owls make great neighbors: No wild parties and they eat scorpions and roof rats. Can you say that about your current neighbors?

In addition to her volunteer work with Desert Rivers Audubon, Eileen is a Master Gardener and a Master Watershed Steward and the face behind Desert Rivers Facebook and Twitter presence.

Conservation News & Notes

Mike Evans, DRAS Conservation Director

McDowell Sonoran Preserve Bird Study

Walter Thurber

* On the afternoon of May 24th, I received a call from Scott Cleaves, the Park Ranger for the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch in Gilbert (GRP). In the previous two weeks he had only seen one cat in the Riparian Preserve. He had repeatedly tried to catch it over that time. He called me to report that he had finally been successful. To the best knowledge of GRP and Riparian Preserve staff, there were NO feral cats left at GRP! The most recent survey in mid-March reported only 13 cats left in the preserve. The staff trapped eight of those cats. Coyotes or natural causes are believed to have accounted for the other five. (Coyotes have been photographed this spring with one adult and two kittens in their mouths.) This compares to last October's survey that had 82 cats and two litters of hidden kittens living in the preserve.

Signs have been installed at the GRP prohibiting the dumping of any type of animal at the facility. An ordinance prohibiting the dumping of animals has been drafted and circulated for comments. It will come before the town council this summer for adoption. Town employees will continue to trap for cats should any more appear at GRP.

If you run into Scott Anderson, Riparian Preserve Executive Director, Lisa Hermann, Education Director, Ranger Scott Cleaves, or Naturalist Jennie Rambo during a future visit to GRP, please thank them for their efforts to make the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch a feral cat-free facility. Thanks go out as well to the members of Save the Cats Arizona for their cooperation in the removal of the cats.

Thank you to all those that contacted Gilbert town staff and elected officials regarding this issue. The hard work of the birding community has been rewarded with a cat-free Important Bird Area (IBA) here in Gilbert, AZ.

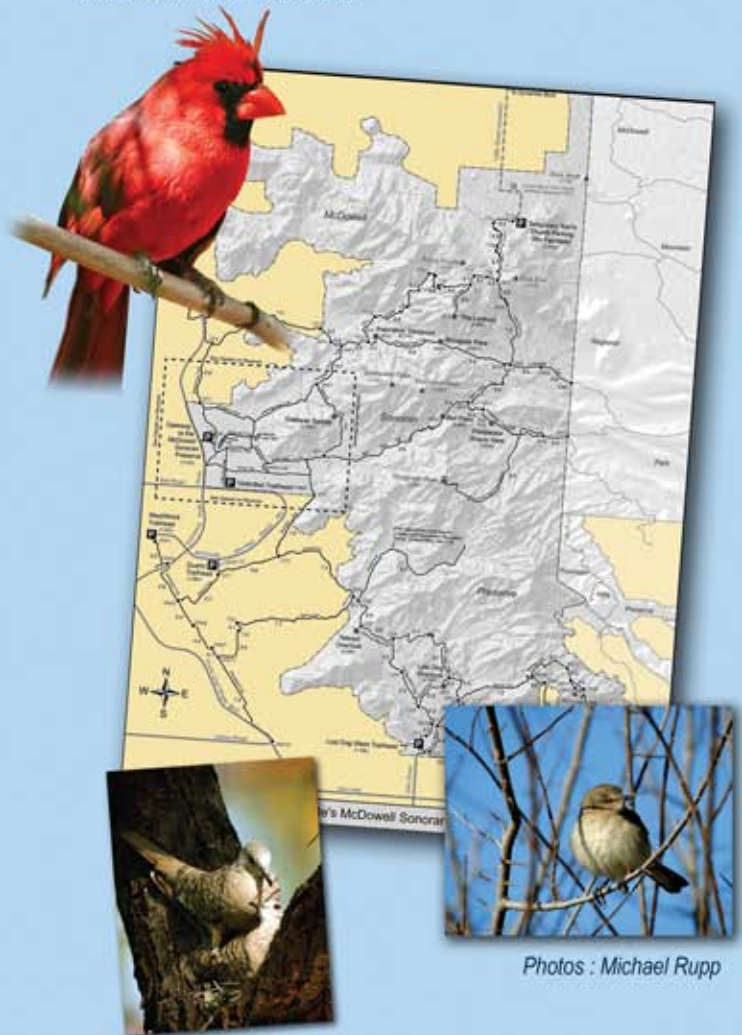
However, since that happy day in late May, I have received two emails reporting additional cats in the preserve. Both reports gave detailed descriptions and very good locations. I have forwarded them on to Riparian Preserve staff so that the cats can be trapped and removed. Please continue to let me know at mascatce@cox.net if you see any on your visits to GRP.

* For those of you interested in our Important Bird Area (IBA) program here in Arizona, the Arizona Audubon Council and Audubon Arizona are planning a conference for this October 1st at the Rio Salado Nature Center. The conference will focus on threats to the IBAs from power line and transmission tower corridors that are scheduled to be established across our state due to the planned increase in alternative power sources. This is a classic public policy conflict, when two desired goals and their implementation conflict with one another. Please save the date on your calendars if this is of interest to you. More details will be coming soon. (So, I suppose there are a few of you wondering, "What the heck is the Arizona Audubon Council?" Well, that is the organization where all of the Audubon societies in Arizona work together on conservation issues.)

* Our board was recently asked by Audubon Arizona to sign on to a letter from the Arizona Wilderness Coalition regarding a threat to roadless areas on the Coronado National Forest. As a former USFS firefighter on the Coronado NF and a former park ranger at Chiricahua National Monument, that is a part of the state near and dear to me and also to many other birders. We added our support to the letter. If you would like more information, you can go to the AZ Wilderness Coalition website: <http://azwild.org/action/foresttravel.php>.

* The Arizona Game and Fish Department is seeking public review and input on an action plan for wildlife viewing recreation in Arizona. The Wildlife Viewing Action Plan outlines objectives and strategies to help guide and implement a statewide watchable wildlife project. It identifies programs, products, and services the department is currently providing in wildlife viewing recreation, discusses opportunities and challenges for the future, and identifies new approaches that, if implemented, will help take advantage of opportunities and overcome challenges. Game and Fish is seeking input from the public on the general topics and strategies that have been developed in the plan. Here in the East Valley, a public meeting will be held from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM on Wednesday, June 29, at the Arizona Game and Fish Department

Twenty years ago, the City of Scottsdale undertook an ambitious program to preserve the McDowell Mountains and associated Sonoran Desert as permanent open space. Some 16,460 acres of land have been acquired by the City and a trail system has been established. Elevations range from approximately 1500-4000 feet. The McDowell Sonoran Preserve is slightly larger than Phoenix's South Mountain Park, said to be the largest municipally owned park in the United States.



Photos : Michael Rupp

The intent is to protect approximately 36,400 acres, equivalent to one-third of Scottsdale's total land area. When completed, the preserve will consist of mountains, desert habitat, and natural corridors linking to designated open space in adjacent communities and to the Tonto National Forest and McDowell Mountain Regional Park. The vision is to create a large sustainable natural habitat for wildlife and desert flora, available for appropriate passive recreation public use.

The McDowell Sonoran Conservancy is leading a first-ever flora and fauna survey of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve. The results of this inventory will enhance public appreciation of the preserve and enable the City of Scottsdale to make better informed resource management decisions. I have agreed to coordinate the two-year avian component. If you would like to help with the bird survey, please contact me at wathurber@cox.net.

It's become a summertime ritual.

Starting with the Twenty-third Supplement in 2003, the American Ornithologists' Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature has published an annual update to its authoritative (and oddly spelled) Check-list of North American Birds. Since no new edition of the Check-list has appeared since 1998—the average span between editions has run to 16 years—keen birders and ornithologists wait eagerly each July for the new issue of the Auk, where the wise men and women of the committee pronounce on matters of, well, classification and nomenclature. Most notoriously, the committee's report notifies us of "splits" and "lumps," recognizing species as distinct or not; but the careful reader will find much more, from rearrangements at levels beyond the species to name changes reflecting relationships with taxa outside the area covered by the Check-list.

In recent years, our wait has been eased by the publication online (aou.org) of the committee's votes some weeks in advance of the appearance of the formal Supplement. Nothing is "official," of course, until the printed pages of the Auk hit the mailbox, and the preliminary online votes at times leave some questions unanswered, but this preview both allays birdery impatience and gives us insights into the deliberations behind those magisterial paragraphs to come.

This year's Supplement is likely to be of particular interest to birders here in the Southwest, both for what it does and for what it does not do.

The AOU committee is not in the first instance a records committee, but among its tasks is the determination of a species' rightful place on the various North American lists. This year's Supplement will add no fewer than seven new birds to the tally of those legitimately recorded in the United States. Three of them join the country's avifauna thanks to strays detected here in the Southwest. New Mexico's astonishing **Sungrebe** from November 2008 was unanimously admitted to the list, as were the somewhat less startling records of **Gray-collared Becard** and **Brown-backed Solitaire** from Arizona in June and July, 2009, respectively. Texas contributes an additional two species, **Bare-throated Tiger-Heron** and **Amazon Kingfisher**, both of which



Amazon Kingfisher

(especially, I think, the former) are not entirely unexpected strays to Arizona—eyes open, minds alert!

Another potential vagrant to our area has been assigned to a new family. **Masked Tityra**, which breeds as close to the Arizona border as southern Sonora, had inhabited that taxonomic no-bird's-land assigned to "genera incertae sedis," but now, along with a number of tropical relatives including

Gray-collared and **Rose-throated Becard**, it is given its own family, Tityridae, in keeping with an action taken by the AOU's South American Checklist Committee as early as 2007. The name perpetuates one of birding's great mysteries, namely, the origin of the word "tityra," which was, unfortunately, given no etymology when Vieillot created the genus almost 200 years ago.

The most closely scrutinized of the committee's decisions are always the "splits," where a single erstwhile species is recognized as in fact comprising two or more distinct species. This time around, the splits will produce no additions to the Arizona list, but birders who have ventured farther afield will be interested to know that the **Snowy Plover** we know from the American Southwest is now distinguished from the Kentish Plovers of the Old World, and that "our" **Mexican Jays** are now treated as distinct from the **Transvolcanic Jay** of Mexico. The red-nosed rallid known variously over the years in North America as the **Florida Gallinule** or the **Common Gallinule** or the **Common Moorhen** is once again split from "the" Moorhen of Europe; the revived species is likely to bear the English name **American Gallinule**, a decidedly lackluster alternative to such eloquent options as **Laughing Moorhen** or **Helmeted Gallinule**.

English names have not been the committee's strong suit lately. Blandness can be forgiven, but the practice of assigning the same name to a "new," more narrowly defined species as that borne by the old taxon more broadly

New Names, New Birds

Article: Rick Wright
Photos: Wikicommons & T. Melton



Brown-backed Solitaire
T. Melton

Bare-throated Tiger-Heron

construed is logically sloppy and confusing.

This time around, the committee rejected a proposal to rectify the English names of the small, stub-tailed North American Troglodytes wrens; how much better it would be to have called the eastern and northern representative "**Eastern Wren**" (in clear contradistinction to "**Pacific Wren**") than to burden it with the old name "**Winter Wren**"—an ambiguous term that now requires us, annoyingly, to add "sensu stricto" if we want to make clear that we are talking about just the newly redefined species. "**Canada Goose**" is another such name, and now the committee has done it again with "**Mexican Jay**"; not only is the name ambiguous (does it in any given instance refer to the "new" species or to the "old" Mexican Jay?), but it is also profoundly misleading in that the **Mexican Jay** sensu stricto has a broad range extending, as Arizona and Texas birders well know, north of the border, while the **Transvolcanic Jay** is in fact a Mexican endemic. We all know that names are the abstriciest of arbitrary signifiers, and the committee has repeatedly insisted that English names are not the appropriate vehicle for indicating taxonomic relationships or geographic peculiarities, but one could almost be excused the impression that the committee has gone out of its way of late to avoid clarity.

Many birders may be surprised by the committee's rejection or deferral of some proposed splits. The evidence for the existence of two species of **Mountain Chickadee**—with "**Gambel's Chickadee**" the resident species in Arizona—is deemed unconvincing. The members' comments are somewhat more encouraging on the restoration of **Myrtle** and **Audubon's Warblers** to full species status (and, to some extent, the elevation of the west Mexican and the Guatemalan breeding populations). Though the proposed split has not passed, several of the committee members voting "no" appear to indicate a willingness to approve the change once more information has been published. Like juncos or **Fox Sparrows**, these are birds whose reproductive behavior and evolutionary history will continue to bedevil any attempt at classification, whatever the species concept behind it.

The committee also rejects the proposed re-split of **Mexican Duck** and **Mallard**. There are multiple lines of evidence suggesting that the taxon **diazii**, Mexican Duck, is more closely allied to **Mottled** and **American Black Ducks** than it is to Mallard, which would seem to require either a lumping of all four taxa or a realignment that removes Mexican Duck from Mallard. Half of the committee, though, finds the genetic evidence unconvincing and the frequency of hybridization and introgression between this taxon and Mallard too great to allow the split. Here we have yet another case where taxonomic determinations have political consequences: Once restored to species status, Mexican Duck would have been a good candidate for protection as a threatened or endangered species.



Sungrebe

Continued on Page 12

The Greater Roadrunner

Article : Jerry Lang, PhD (with excerpts from *The Real Roadrunner* by Martha Anne Maxon) Photos : Denny Green

As non-migratory birds of the American Desert Southwest, roadrunners (*Geococcyx californianus*) are highly adapted to the vagaries of the desert environment – particularly food availability, which is associated with rainfall. This adaptability is reflected in roadrunner breeding strategy and mating behavior.

Roadrunners have a very long breeding period that can extend from late winter into autumn. In drier deserts such as the Mojave, there may be only one brood per year whereas in wetter Sonoran Desert years roadrunners may nest two or three times.

Nesting and mating peak when reptilian and small mammal prey are abundant. Males offer females food as part of courtship, and courtship is most successful when males have these more highly nourishing prey to offer than when they have only insects and other arthropods or nothing.

Roadrunner courtship and mating continue during nesting and probably facilitate coordinated parental care of nestlings and renesting activity. The first sign of male roadrunner breeding behavior is frequent cooing throughout the day. Cooing apparently helps establish territory as well as attracts mates.

Pair bonding begins when a male and female begin foraging most of the day together even though they still may roost separately at night. Eventually, they begin roosting together and start hunting for a nest site. In selecting a site,



usually the female will whine from a lower perch and the male will bring a stick to her. If she drops the stick and continues foraging, the nest selection process continues. Finally, a site will be selected and nest construction begins. It is usually only at this point that actual mating will occur.

The mating call of male roadrunners is a series of 4 – 8 coos. The male bows his head with raised crest and orange head patch showing and emits the cooing notes as he lifts his head. The first coo note is the shortest and the last note is the longest. Males perform this mating call from high perches and will call for several hours.

Female roadrunners often give a barking call of 2 – 22 short, rapid notes in response to the males' mating calls. They also give these calls while incubating eggs.

Both adult sexes as well as nestlings use a bill clack along with throaty whining sounds to communicate location and when startled or agitated.

A mating display begins with the male turning and running away from the female while touching his wings above his back and quickly lowering them resulting in a loud popping sound. As he does this, he holds his tail forward over his back showing the white tail tips. His bright orange head patch is also visible during this display. This part of the display is repeated 4 or 5 times. The male then begins a tail wagging display in which he moves his tail from side to side as he bows his head and then slowly lifts it. The tail is fanned out displaying the white tips when the head is up, and the tail is closed when the head is bowed. The male emits soft, low frequency "putts" or whining sounds during tail wagging.

Tail wagging begins about 30 yards from the female, and the male walks or runs toward the female stopping several times to repeat the display. Receptive females give a vertical tail flick and a bill clack. As the male approaches and begins his mounting jump, the female turns her back, flicks

her tail upward, and then lowers it. Unreceptive females flick their tails to the side and drop it as they move away. If this happens, the male may circle her and continue tail wagging until finally giving up and eating the food.

During mating, the female lowers her breast and wings while the male jumps and lands on her. He stands on her upper wings, and rapidly stamps his feet. Just before mating is over, the female reaches up and grabs any food from the male's mouth. Females will move their heads upward even if the male has no food. Females will eat the courtship food until nestlings hatch. After that they will give any food to the young.

After mating the pair does a coordinated tail and head flicking display as the male circles the female. This display consists of the male bowing his head, slightly lowering his wings and giving a soft coo before flicking his head, wings, and tail upward.



Birding Highlands Center Prescott

Article: Kathe Anderson

Bird Photos: Cindy Marple Forest Photos: Highlands Center

The first stop on a birding trip to Prescott should be at Highlands Center for Natural History—not just because it has nice restrooms! You can actually start your bird list in the bathroom, taking notes on the wonderful painted tiles with nature themes, designed mostly by children. The tiles line the walls and, with luck, present a preview of what you might see.

While there are longer, more arduous trails up to a viewing point and down to a stream (that sometimes flows), the three-quarters mile Stretch-Pebble Loop Trail offers a leisurely, mostly flat stroll with a reliable assortment of birds found in the mixed habitat of oaks, alligator juniper and ponderosa pines. The unusual trail name comes from rounded pebbles of Red Jasper, White Quartz and harder rock being "stretched" by a billion years of tectonic forces. An exposed example is right next to the trail, on the sunny, southern side of the loop.

Familiar desert species, such as Mourning Doves, House Finches and Lesser Goldfinches, seem to follow us up from the lowlands. But it doesn't take long to discover the higher elevation birds we're hoping to find. If a White-breasted Nuthatch is not hanging around, literally, in the parking lot, one usually shows up somewhere along the trail. A little band of its smaller cousins, Pygmy Nuthatches, bounce through at some point. Another reliable charming LBF (little bitty flitty) is a Bridled Titmouse. A Spotted Towhee often sings from a perch, exposed—or not! Acorn Woodpeckers sound off and show up near the road. Toss in a handful of busy, softly buzzing Bushtits for good measure. Watch for Cooper's Hawks to scatter everything in a nanosecond, and bring silence to the forest.



In the winter, check to see if icicles drape the water catch basin on the east side of the James Learning Center. It can be a lovely collaboration of human and natural art. Look for Western Bluebirds in the open area near the gift shop. On the far side of the Stretch-Pebble loop, away from the Center, a Townsend's Solitaire once sat on a snag to give everyone a great view of this hard-to-find bird.

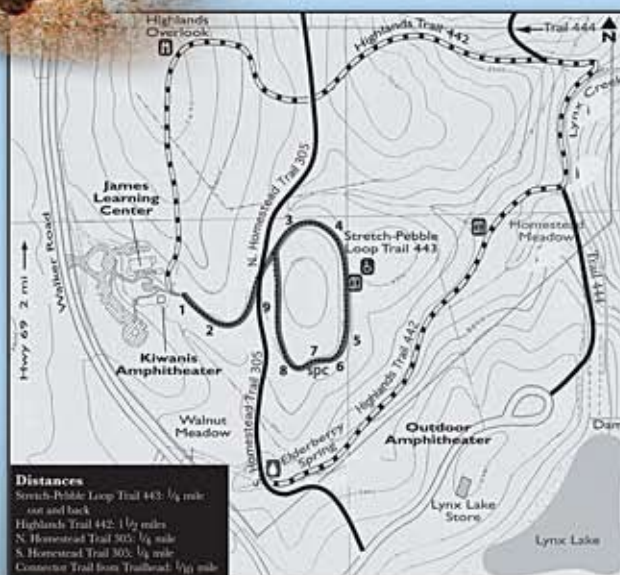
To reach Highlands Center, take AZ69 to Prescott, and turn south on Walker Road, marked with brown signs to Lynx Lake. The Center is about two miles down Walker Road on the left. From April to September, the gates open at 7am. The weather is usually perfect at that time in the morning, a cool respite from the desert. It's free, but donations are happily accepted—and will help keep this wonderful site open for lovely accessible birding.

More information on Highlands Center can be seen on their website at: www.highlandscenter.org



In the summer, a Western Wood-Pewee usually takes up residence. Violet-green Swallows glint bright white, then iridescent green as they sail effortlessly in the sky. Empidonax flycatchers come through, sit, call and cause consternation. Both Western and Summer Tanagers add color to the greenery. Double-crested Cormorants and Great Blue Herons may fly overhead, on their way to or from nearby Lynx Lake.

From the Highlands Center, it's just a hop, skip and a jump to other birding sites in the area—Lynx Lake, the community of Walker about one thousand feet higher in elevation (and reliable for Painted Redstarts in the summer), and Watson Woods Riparian Preserve. Each habitat has different birds, but Highlands Center has the best bathrooms.



West to Oracle: Samuel Rhoads in Arizona

Rick Wright, Tucson

Hard as it is for my nonbirding friends to believe, summer is the season for out-of-state birders to visit southeast Arizona.

The tradition of warm-season visits to the state is a venerable one, antedating the first Lane guide by nearly three-quarters of a century. One of the earliest traveling birders to visit our area was Samuel N. Rhoads, a well-known New Jersey observer who spent five weeks in Pima and Pinal counties in the summer of 1891. Unlike most present-day visitors to the state, Rhoads not only observed the local birds but collected specimens for the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia, where the nearly 400 skins he took can still be examined today.

Much has changed in the Santa Catalinas in the last century. Human intervention has altered habitats, and the ranges of certain birds have contracted or expanded in response. Early reports such as that published by Rhoads in the Proceedings of the Philadelphia Academy for 1892 provide an invaluable "baseline" for comparison — and a fascinating glimpse into what it was like to bird the Catalinas more than 100 years ago.

Rhoads left Texas on 6 or 7 June 1891, arriving in Tucson on 10 June. He described Oracle, his base for much of his stay in Arizona, as "a post-hamlet situated in the oak belt" of the mountains; in just over a month's birding and collecting, he recorded 126 species, most of them represented by specimens secured in the canyons of the Santa Catalinas near Oracle.

Many of the birds Rhoads recorded are still common and expected in the area today. Others are much rarer than Rhoads found them, and a few appear to have actually increased.

The modern birder visiting Peppersauce Canyon and similar sites in the northern Catalinas will encounter many (but not all!) of the same birds as this ornithological pioneer — and will appreciate them more, perhaps, by recalling Samuel Rhoads' experiences with them more than a century ago.



California Condor: One was shot near the summit of Mt. Lemmon "several years" before Rhoads' visit.

Crested Caracara: Rhoads found this bird "occasionally" at Oracle. The species is now very local in Arizona.

Scaled Quail: Rhoads found mixed flocks of Scaled and Gambel's Quail in the oaks, and collected a specimen of the former in Oracle.

Montezuma Quail: Rhoads found this bird as high as 7,000 feet in the Catalinas, where it is now much more rarely observed than in other ranges to the south and east. **"Gould's" Turkey:** Rhoads never saw this bird in the Catalinas. Once common, he says, it was wiped out by a disastrous fire on Mt. Lemmon. **Spotted Owl:** This bird can still be heard in the Catalinas, but is probably much less common now than when Rhoads saw several in the summer of 1891. **Magnificent Hummingbird:** Rhoads seems to have been the first ornithologist to observe this species in the Catalinas, where it is now common at high elevations. **"Red-shafted" Flicker:** Rhoads described this now-common species as rare even at high elevations. **Greater Pewee:** Rhoads found this species to be abundant in the ponderosa pines of the Catalinas; if his identifications were correct, the bird has greatly decreased since his time. **Gray Vireo:** Now scarce and local in the area, this bird was listed by Rhoads as "frequent." **Botteri's Sparrow:** Three were collected in "thick bunches of bear-grass" near Catalina, where the bird is now decidedly unexpected. **Canyon Towhee:** Rhoads was the first ornithologist to note in print the "remarkable" similarity between the songs of this bird and the **Northern Cardinal**. Of equal interest are some species Rhoads did not find on his visit to Oracle: **Inca Dove:** Now a familiar town bird, the Inca Dove had arrived in Tucson not many years before Rhoads' visit, and was still very local, if not rare. **Great-tailed Grackle:** This abundant species did not arrive in Arizona until the late 1930s.

Arizona Native Plants

Michael Rupp

Southwestern
Pricklypoppy



Wherever you travel in Arizona and New Mexico, the Southwestern Pricklypoppy can often be seen on the roadsides swaying in the wind and attracting bees and other insects to its beautiful yellow-orange stamens. Part of the Poppy Family (Papaveraceae), the Pricklypoppy is also called the Prickly Poppy, Bluestem Pricklypoppy, Crested Pricklypoppy, Thistle Poppy, Chicote, and my favorite, the Cowboy's Fried Egg. Other species of this poppy can be found primarily in the greater southwest, with one species found along the east coast from New England to Texas.

It is a perennial native plant found in a variety of habitats throughout Maricopa, Gila, Yavapai, Pinal, Santa Cruz, Pima, and Cochise counties from around 500 feet elevation to over 5,400 feet elevation, growing in dry disturbed soil of roadsides, old fields, waste places, washes, mesas, and uncultivated areas. These are very drought resistant plants. They come in abundance on overgrazed ranges.

All parts of this plant are considered poisonous; however, Mourning Doves eat the seeds of six species of Argemone in Arizona. Prickly Poppies have a history of herbal use and cultivation in the Americas and other regions of the world.

Growing to around 16 to 24 inches tall, the attractive flowers are white to occasionally pinkish, 2 to 3 inches across, fragrant with 4 to 6 petals that look like crepe paper and many orange colored stamens. Blooming period is mid-March through November. The spiny leaves alternate, are bluish green, deeply lobed, clasp the stem at the base, and are 2 to 8 inches long. Each seed pod bears a long slender horn which ends in one stiff spine, and usually with no additional spines, but sometimes 1 to 3 very slender ones near the base. The prickly oblong seedpods are 1 to 1 1/2 inches long, and produce many dark brown or blackish seeds. The rounded seeds are about 1/6 to 1/12 inch in diameter and the surface is finely honeycombed, with a raised scar down one side.

Monarch
late sum - early fall

Queen
- all year

In the 1980s in New York, a group of birders-some of whom happened to be butterfly enthusiasts-started directing their birding skills towards butterflies, mainly trying to identify them with binoculars. Out of this beginning, under the guidance of Jeffrey Glassberg, the North American Butterfly Association (NABA) was formed and with it, the new, rapidly growing hobby of butterfly watching- butterflying. The use of close-focus binoculars and macro photography has opened a whole new world to thousands of people.

In the United States, Arizona is second only to Texas in its number of butterfly species. As of this writing (2001) some 330 species have occurred here. The reason for this is the state's great diversity of habitats. The western borderlands have the Colorado River Valley, with the Mohave Desert in the north-west. Rocky Mountain and the Great Basin affinities with the sub-alpine forests and meadows and sagebrush flats enter the state from the north and east, culminating in the Mogollon Rim and the White Mountains. The greatest diversity however, is in the southeastern part of the state with its Sonoran and Chihuahuan Desert influences and the "sky island" archipelago that is the northern extension of Mexico's Sierra Madre Occidental. In the counties of Pima, Santa Cruz, Cochise, Pinal and Graham, more than 250 species of butterfly have been documented. It is here that butterflyers search the border canyons-Sycamore, California Gulch, Garden, and Guadalupe-during the summer monsoons for rare strays from Mexico. It is here that one can feel the breath of the Neotropics from mid-July into September, when the land turns green and the sun angels in their countless thousands dance and glide through the air, bringing us dreams of those magical lands to the south.

Observing can be the beginning of a pleasurable experience of habitats that are home to plants, birds, and other insects as well as butterflies. Spending time outside in natural habitats, we discover the immediacy and the

wonder of organisms that have existed long before human culture began. It is not surprising that some of us develop a passion for butterflies. But that passion can spread beyond mere enjoyment to include all the life that is connected to butterflies.

Butterfly Life Cycle

Butterflies deposit their eggs on discrete host plants. Some species lay only on one species of plant, while others may have quite a number of hosts. The egg is only a few millimeters in size; its surface is porous with about 14,000 holes that allow air but not water to enter. The larva or caterpillar stage hatches from the egg and begins to eat the host plant. The butterfly's larva, like all insects, has an outside skeleton or skin that eventually becomes too small for the growing caterpillar. It sheds this outer skin four or five times as it becomes larger, and three different hormones regulate this molting process. One of these, called juvenile hormone, keeps the larva from developing adult structures. This hormone does not circulate during the last molt, and some adult structures immediately begin to form on the inside of the caterpillar. When the last-stage caterpillar has grown to sufficient size, it wanders off to enter the pupa stage. In this stage, which results in an adult butterfly, there is a transformative chemical breakdown and reformation of all but certain thorax structures. The adult butterfly emerges from

the pupal case and mates with its own species, and the female completes the cycle by laying her eggs on specific plants.

There is no doubt that there are fewer butterflies today than 100 or even 50 years ago. Gardening for butterflies could remedy that decline, at least in part.

Gardening for butterflies also creates habitat for many other insects, spiders, birds, and lizards. The difference from formal or vegetable gardening than gardening for butterflies is the selection of nectar and host plants that will attract and produce butterflies. Add a few nectar plants such as Butterfly Mist, milkweeds, Trailing Lantana, and Butterfly Bush to your garden, and you will be amazed at the number of butterflies that stop by. You will learn quite a lot about butterfly behavior by watching them in your own garden.

Local places to see butterflies:

Arizona Botanical Gardens
Hassayampa River Preserve
Hayfield Site, 91st Ave
Gilbert Riparian Preserve
Salt River Rec. Sites
Regional Parks

Butterflies of Arizona

A Photographic Guide



Bob Stewart, Priscilla Brodtkin & Hank Brodtkin
West Coast Lady Press

Butterflies of Arizona

Excerpts from the book of the same name by
Hank & Priscilla Brodtkin and Bob Stewart
(with permission from the authors)
Photos not to scale



Red-spotted
Purple



White
Admiral



Two-tailed
Swallowtail
Feb - Nov



Giant
Swallowtail



Painted Lady
- all year



American Snout
- all year



Cloudless
Sulphur



Variegated Fritillary
- all year



Ruddy
Daggerwing



Mexican
Fritillary



Western Tiger
Swallowtail
June/July



Hackberry
Emperor



Pipevine
Swallowtail



Volunteer Aerie

Marion Saffell

Each of our volunteers brings special talent and personality to their jobs. However, one of our brightest stars of whom we are very proud is **Joy Dingley**. Joy has served us well these past five years as our Education Director. A native of England, Joy worked as Bursar of a school in England. The Bursar is in charge of everything "except curriculum." The fact that she is such an organized person has also served her well as our Education Director.

Joy enjoys teaching birding to all age groups, from senior citizens to school children. She founded and leads the Desert Rivers Early Birds Club for children and as a result we have some exceptional young birders developing their skills. She has also been anxious to extend the birding experience to other less obvious groups like the Hope Kids, an organization for families of children with life threatening illnesses, and to Phoenix Blind Children's Society for whom she organizes a bird walk using their other senses.

Doing the artwork herself, Joy has created over a dozen original conservation, environmental and birding games for children for us to use at festivals and special occasions in our booths.

A member in England of The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Joy began birding in earnest about 24 years ago. When she and husband Steve moved to the USA in 2003, and as they began to learn our birds, Joy says she became more aware of the mechanics of what one has to do to properly identify birds. One of Desert Rivers' original eight founders, Joy hopes to leave a legacy of helping the next generation to understand, appreciate and preserve our beautiful fauna and flora. As she says, "Otherwise, there will be nothing left to enjoy in the outdoors." Joy enjoys birding because it's so much fun, but she says the best thing is that she has met such great people through her Audubon work. Even though Joy is handing over the reins to Jamie Bradford, our new Education Director, she will continue working with all things Educational for Desert Rivers Audubon in the future. We consider ourselves very fortunate to have Joy Dingley with us!

Arizona Field Ornithologists Studying Arizona Birds



AZFO Field Expeditions NOT your typical birding field trip

So what is the difference between a birding field trip and an AZFO Field Expedition? Field Expeditions are organized with a specific purpose and data-gathering goal in mind. Typically, they will be located in little-known or under birded areas where the seasonal status of birds is incomplete. Also different from typical birding field trips, most expeditions will be two or more days long and all participants do not remain together. Instead, participants are divided into several teams, each with a qualified leader, which conduct surveys in different areas during the day. Normally, all participants will reconvene during lunch or dinner at a base camp or at other designated locations to review what was discovered.

27-28 August - NE AZ shorebirds: Fall birding trips to the Navajo and Hopi reservations often have a broad focus, and are frequently timed for later in the season. On this expedition, we'll target ponds and wastewater treatment facilities to capture a snapshot of shorebird migration in this corner of the state. Leader: TBA.

24-25 September - Greenlee Co. migrants: Dominated by the Blue Range in the north, bordered by the Peloncillo Mountains to the south, and bisected by the Gila and San Francisco Rivers, Greenlee County is steeped in rich bird habitat. Yet, this is probably the least birded county in Arizona during fall migration! Explore this unique area with us as we unravel the mystery of fall migration in eastern Arizona. Leader: John Yerger.

3-4 December - Gray Vireo Surveys in SW AZ: Last winter's surveys in the northern Kofa Mts were interesting, but did not yield the desired results. This winter, we will time our surveys for earlier in the season in an attempt to discover new locations for Gray Vireos, a fairly rare winter resident in Arizona. Leader: TBA.

EVENTS & FIELD TRIPS

JUL - AUG - SEPT 2011

Check DRAS website for additions and changes
Make reservations with Susie Vaught, Field Trips Director;
azvaughts_2@msn.com Home, 480 898-7564.

Field Trip - 'California Dreaming' with Kathe Anderson

Thursday, July 21 at 8:00am - Saturday, July 23 at 5:00pm
Orange County Coastal Sites

It's time to go back to Bolsa Chica Wetlands, a fabulous spot near Huntington Beach. That's the main destination, but with a couple of extra days, the trip will also include stops at San Joaquin Wildlife Sanctuary and Upper Newport Bay, plus stops on the way to and from the coast to help break up the trip a bit. Please register with kathe.coot@cox.net.

Field Trip - Pinal Mountains with David L. Pearson

Saturday, July 23 - 4:00am - 3:00pm

A day long survey of the Globe/Miami area begins with low altitude chaparral and continues with Douglas Fir & Aspen habitats, concluding at the mountain-top cabins' hummingbird feeders. Expect to see 75-85 species on this trip. RSVP with Susie Vaught, Field Trips Director, azvaughts_2@msn.com.

Desert Rivers Audubon Monthly Meeting

Burrowing Owls Habitat with Wild at Heart: Help Build Owl Homes

On Tuesday, September 13, 2011, Greg Clark of Wild at Heart joins us at 7pm at the Gilbert Community Center, 130 N. Oak Street, to introduce our Together Green grant project to install a Burrowing Owl Habitat at Zanjero Park, 3785 S. Lindsay Road (Lindsay Road, South of Loop 202), Gilbert. We'll need your help at the end of October to dig in the burrows as well as your help caring for the owls onsite before their release in spring 2012. Ask all your owl questions, visit with a Burrowing Owl and sign up for a volunteer opportunity to help your feathered neighbors!

Audubon Council and Audubon Arizona Conference

Saturday, October 1, Rio Salado Nature Center, Phoenix

The conference will focus on threats to the Important Bird Areas (IBAs) from power line and transmission tower corridors that are scheduled to be established across our state due to the planned increase in alternative power sources. Contact Mike Evans, Desert Rivers Audubon Conservation Director, at maskatce@cox.net if you would like to attend.

Tucson Bird & Wildlife Festival - August 17-21 at Riverpark Inn

Keynote Speaker - Kenn Kaufman, Expert led Field Trips, Displays and Workshops, much more. For more information contact Tucson Audubon at: www.tucsonaudubon.org/festival



Conservation Notes continued from Page 2

Mesa Regional Office, 7200 E. University Drive. Here is a link to the Action Plan:

http://www.azgfd.gov/images/outdoor_recreation/watchablewildlife/WildlifeViewPlanForReview.pdf.

For additional information on the Watchable Wildlife program, check out this link: www.azgfd.gov/wreview.

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



Winter Wren (*Troglodytes hiemalis*), Granite Reef Recreation Site, Maricopa County. This Eastern Winter Wren was discovered on 30 December 2010 by Tommy DeBardeleben and photographed by him on 26 February 2011. Rare but nearly annual visitor in past years, but a surprising number of reports

this winter. This is the eighth one documented to AZFO this winter. Winter Wren has a noticeable and distinct supercilium, barred flanks, and a short tail. Pacific Wren has those same features as well, but the two are separated visually by color, as the Winter Wren has a pale throat and much lighter breast than the darker colored Pacific Wren. They also differ significantly in their call notes, which is what is mainly heard when these species are observed in Arizona.

Gray Catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*), Sonoita Creek State Natural Area, Santa Cruz County. This Gray Catbird was discovered and photographed by Alan Schmierer on 18 March 2011. Gray Catbird is a casual to rare migrant and winter visitor in southeast Arizona. All gray bird with a black cap and rufous undertail coverts.



Golden-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia atricapilla*), Burro Creek Recreation Area, Mohave County. This Golden-crowned Sparrow was discovered and photographed by David Vander Pluym on 27 February 2011. Golden-crowned Sparrow is a rare transient and winter visitor which occurs annually. It is most often found in large flocks of White-crowned Sparrows. The bird has or is undergoing a pre-alternate molt. In this photo you can see the gold forecrown and the extensive black on the head above the eye.

Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*), Arlington, Maricopa County. This Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk was photographed by Pierre Deviche on 05 March 2011. This bird has been seen repeatedly in the past few months by multiple observers and apparently has been present at the same location during several previous winters. Appears to be a rare but regular winter visitor. Probably underreported because it is difficult to identify and because subspecies are often overlooked. Light extremely rare anywhere. Typical Red-tailed Hawk body shape and size. Dark border on flight feathers indicates that it is an adult. Crisp black and white underparts with little brown/rufous. Back is dark blackish, mottled with white. Tail pale, with just a bit of dark toward tip.



Elegant Tern (*Thalasseyas elegans*), San Ignacio Golf Club, Green Valley, Pima County. An Elegant Tern was discovered and photographed by Chuck and Jodi Tribble on 18 June 2011. There are eight previously accepted records, which like this one, all fall between late May and late July. The photos show a large tern with limited black under the wings and a long thin orange bill with a pronounced droop toward the tip.

NOTABLE ARIZONA STATE SIGHTINGS

Palm Warbler (*Dendroica palmarum*), along the Santa Cruz River south of Cortaro Road, Pima County. This Palm Warbler was discovered by Jerry Bock and Keith Kamper on 2 March 2011 and was photographed by Andrew Core on 3 March 2011. Palm Warbler is a casual transient and winter visitor. There are over 50 records for the state and for a while it was removed from the Arizona Bird Committee review list, but, like some other boreal breeding warblers, its occurrence in Arizona in recent years has declined and it was returned to the review list. There have been several recent records perhaps indicating it is increasing again. Lemon-yellow undertail coverts. General drab, gray-brown coloration elsewhere with dark eye line and long, pale supercilium. The bird also constantly bobbed its tail as it moved around, which is a key characteristic of this species. Brown underparts indicate western subspecies.



McCown's Longspur (*Calcarius mccownii* (away from SE Arizona)), Sulphur Springs Valley; Lake Cochise, Cochise County. This McCown's Longspur was discovered and photographed by Michael Todd on 21 February 2011. Formerly regular in small numbers in the Sulphur Springs and San Rafael Valleys of SE Arizona, this species appears to have decreased in recent

years. Visible in the flight shot are the contrasting chestnut median coverts, with the gray of the lesser coverts coming in, black T tail pattern, black breast band, plain face and heavy bill.

Tennessee Warbler (*Vermivora peregrina*), along the Santa Cruz River south of Cortaro Road, Pima County. This Tennessee Warbler was discovered and photographed by Andrew Core on 02 March 2011. It was photographed again by Mark Sharon on 3 March 2011. The last few years there have been multiple Tennessee Warblers documented. Arizona saw a significant drop-off in reports of this vagrant in the 1990's and early 2000's compared to the relatively numerous reports in the state from the 1970's and 1980's. Note the long white undertail coverts, short tail and unstreaked underparts which separate this species from Orange-crowned Warbler. Light supercilium and dark eyeline are supporting marks.



Red-breasted Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus ruber*), Pennsylvania Ave. near Paton's House, Santa Cruz County. This Red-breasted Sapsucker was discovered by Randy Moore on 2 January 2011 and photographed by Michael Todd on 20 February 2011. Casual transient and winter visitor to Arizona. A number of reports this year. Extensively red head and no hint of black breast band which would point to it being a hybrid.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (*Tyrannus forficatus*), Buckeye, Maricopa County. Discovered by Dean and Joan Luehrs one half mile east of Arlington School Road on the Arlington Canal Road on 4 June 2011.

Giant Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*) in Arizona

Pierre Deviche (deviche@asu.edu)
Reprinted from the AZFO website with
author's permission www.azfo.org

In 2004 the American Ornithologists' Union officially split North American White-cheeked Geese into two species: Canada Goose, *Branta canadensis* and Cackling Goose, *B. hutchinsii* (Banks et al., 2004). The largest recognized subspecies of Canada Goose is the Giant Canada Goose, *B. c. maxima* (Fig. 1).



Figure 1. Amherst, MA; 26 Dec. 2006. Typical Giant Canada Goose (G) with smaller Canada Geese (*B. c. canadensis* and/or interior). Photo/J.P. Smith.

In the 1950s *B. c. maxima* was considered extinct. However, the discovery of isolated populations in Minnesota in the 1960s (Hanson, 1997) and the subsequent implementation of an intensive and successful reintroduction program along the Mississippi Valley Flyway and in some western states (e.g., Colorado) have resulted in the Giant Canada Goose now being widespread and locally abundant, with an estimated 2005 population exceeding 1.5 million birds (Mowbray et al., 2002; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 2005). Southern populations of *B. c. maxima* are sedentary whereas northern populations are migratory and winter mostly in the Tennessee and Mississippi valleys (Mlodinow et al., 2006; Mowbray et al., 2002).

There are few confirmed records of Giant Canada Goose in western states (e.g., Mlodinow et al., 2006). However, the continued population and range expansions of this subspecies make it likely that it will occur with increased frequency in the western U.S. Observers in Arizona where most Canada Geese belong to the moffitti (= Great Basin) subspecies should, therefore, recognize the differences separating *B. c. moffitti* from *B. c. maxima*.

On 22 Dec. 2007, J.P. Smith observed a large Canada Goose in a flock of *B. c. moffitti* at the Scottsdale Pavilions ponds (Maricopa Co., AZ; Fig. 2: Foreground bird). This bird presents characteristics consistent with *B. c. maxima* (see below) and may constitute the first documented record of this subspecies in Arizona.



Figure 2. Scottsdale Pavilions, Scottsdale, AZ; 22 Dec. 2007. Giant Canada Goose, *B. c. maxima* (foreground bird). Note pale breast and large white cheek patch extending to base of bill. Photo/J.P. Smith.

Here we present some ways to separate typical *B. c. maxima* and *B. c. moffitti* (Mlodinow et al., 2006; Mowbray et al., 2002). We emphasize that birds belonging to various Canada Goose subspecies can look very similar and in some cases interbreed (Mowbray et al., 2002), resulting in individuals showing intermediate characteristics (see below). Thus, only archetypical birds can be safely identified and identification must rely on a combination of characters. *B. c. maxima* and *B. c. moffitti* can be differentiated as follows:

- **Size.** *B. c. maxima* is, on average, larger (average body weight almost 5 kg)

than *B. c. moffitti* (less than 4 kg). Note that both subspecies exhibit a wide range of individual variation in body mass. Thus, especially from a distance, the two subspecies can appear to be the same size (Fig. 3).

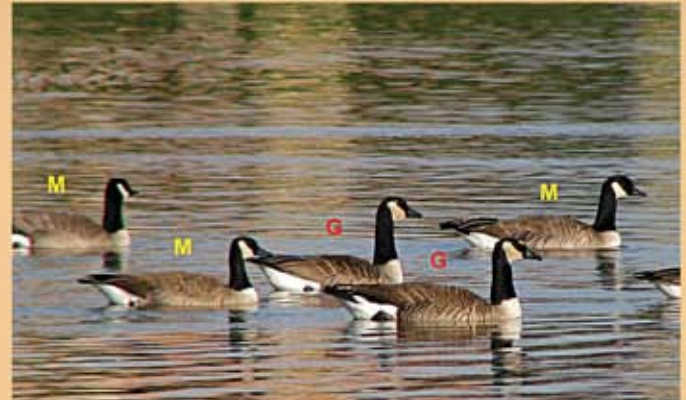


Figure 3. McCormick Ranch, Scottsdale AZ; 2 February 2008. Two Giant Canada Geese (G) swimming along with *B. c. moffitti* (M). On *B. c. maxima*, note large size, extensive white cheek patch, and pale forehead. Photo/P. Deviche.

- **Proportions.** *B. c. maxima* is longer-necked than *B. c. moffitti*. Neck length in White-cheeked Geese is best estimated in flying birds because when birds are on land or swimming, their apparent neck length can vary considerably depending on posture (relaxed or alert; see, e.g., http://www.azfo.org/gallery/CAGO_Scottsdale_2008.html).

- **Plumage color.** On average, *B. c. maxima* has paler underparts (especially the breast, which looks almost white) than *B. c. moffitti*. This difference is accentuated by the fact in *B. c. maxima* that the black neck stocking appears not to come down as far on the front of the neck as in other geese, i.e., the white of the breast extends slightly more up the neck (Figs. 1-3). Even though the average color difference is quite distinct, caution must be exercised because plumage color in *B. c. maxima* and *B. c. moffitti* probably overlap completely (S. Mlodinow, personal communication).

- **Head color and pattern.** *B. c. maxima* typically shows more exposed white on the cheeks than other forms (Figs. 1-3). The white patch in *B. c. maxima* extends higher up the cheeks and toward the crown than in other subspecies and in contrast to *B. c. moffitti*, this patch contacts the base of the bill. Most *B. c. maxima* individuals have a white band on the forehead between the black crown and bill. It should be pointed out that *B. c. moffitti* and other Canada Goose subspecies as well as some Cackling Geese can have this band which, therefore, is in and by itself not diagnostic. *B. c. maxima* has a proportionally larger and more massive bill than *B. c. moffitti*.

- **Voice.** *B. c. maxima* reportedly has a deeper voice than *B. c. moffitti*.



Figure 4. - Description on opposite page

Figure 4. Scottsdale Pavilions, Scottsdale, AZ; 30 Dec. 2007. Large Canada Goose (foreground bird) next to a *B. c. moffitti* Canada Goose. The foreground bird shows characteristics that are partly consistent with *B. c. maxima*. Photo/P. Deviche.

On 30 Dec. 2007 at McCormick Ranch (Scottsdale, AZ), P. Deviche observed a different large size Canada Goose than the individual seen at the same site by J.P. Smith on 22 Dec. 2007. This bird is noticeably larger and longer-necked than *B. c. moffitti* and has a whiter breast and pale underparts (Fig. 4: Swimming; Fig. 5: Flying). It also has a large white cheek patch and a pale forehead band (Fig. 6).



Figure 5. Scottsdale Pavilions, Scottsdale, AZ; 30 Dec. 2007. Same bird as on Fig. 4 in flight with two *B. c. moffitti* (M). Note large size, long neck, and pale breast. Photo/P. Deviche.



Figure 6. Scottsdale Pavilions, Scottsdale, AZ; 30 Dec. 2007. Detail of the head of the foreground bird shown on Fig. 4. Note that the white cheek patch does not reach the base of the bill. Photo/P. Deviche.

The above features are consistent with the 30 Dec. 2007 goose being a *B. c. maxima*. However, the pale forehead band of this bird is poorly defined compared to that of typical Giant Canada Goose (compare Fig. 6 with Figs. 2 and 3). In addition, the white cheek patch of the 30 Dec. 2007 bird does not appear to contact the base of the bill as is typical of Giant Canada Goose. Therefore, this goose is an atypical *B. c. maxima* or perhaps an intergrade between this form and *B. c. moffitti*.

The origin of Giant Canada Geese in Arizona is unknown. No introduction program for this subspecies was ever implemented in the state (M. Rabe, AZ Game and Fish Department; personal communication) and local aviculturists apparently do not or at least rarely keep this form in captivity (J. Badman, personal communication). Thus, *B. c. maxima* in Arizona presumably are of wild origin, but it cannot be excluded that they descend from introduced out-of-state stocks.

Field observers in Arizona are encouraged to focus on the plumage and structural characteristics of large wintering Canada Geese they encounter and to document their sightings photographically. In doing so they have an opportunity to advance the understanding of the variability in these traits that exists within and between White-cheeked Goose subspecies. Detailed observations also offer the potential to increase knowledge of the geographic distribution of these birds and its changes over time.

Acknowledgements:

The author is indebted to Troy Corman, Steve Mlodinow, Michael Moore, Kurt Rademaker, James P. Smith, and Mark Stevenson for valuable comments on early versions of this article.

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New Names, New Birds

Continued from Page 3



The most far-reaching of the changes approved in this year's Supplement are certainly those to the classification of the wood warblers. A thorough new analysis including nearly every species and subspecies in the family Parulidae has produced some entirely new groupings and some surprising name changes to go with them. Geothlypis, the venerable yellowthroat genus, now also includes **Kentucky, Mourning, and MacGillivray's Warblers** (but not **Connecticut**, which remains in a monotypic *Oporornis*). **Canada** and **Wilson's Warblers** move over to join **Red-faced Warbler** in *Cardellina*. **Hooded Warbler, American** and **Tropical Parulas**, and all of the warblers formerly known as *Dendroica* belong with **American Redstart**—and thanks to priority, are henceforth to be known under that species' genus name, *Setophaga*. All this is going to take some getting used to for those of us who grew up with the old warbler genera, but the majority of the committee finds the evidence presented in support of the proposal complete and compelling, "and too bad about *Dendroica*." **Yellow-breasted Chat** will probably be left in the family for the time being, but the analysis tends to support the suspicion that this odd bird belongs elsewhere, a change to watch for in future Supplements. But beware: once you start reading them, your summers will never be the same.

Rick Wright (birdernj@gmail.com) lives and birds in Little Falls, New Jersey with his wife, Alison Beringer, and their chocolate Lab, Gellert. His next visit to Arizona will be to deliver a lecture, "Geronimo, the General, and the Hummingbird," at the 2012 Wings Over Willcox festival.

The Family Album

Family : Trochilidae
Hummingbirds

Article and Photos: Cindy Marple

Hummingbirds fascinate us with their tiny size, aerobatic maneuvers, jewel-like colors and outright lack of fear of humans. I've even had them come up to investigate when I was wearing brightly colored clothing! We are fortunate to live near the "Hummingbird Capital" of North America. One trip to the mountains in the Southeast part of the state at the right time of year can

afford views of most of the 18 species that regularly occur in the U.S. However if you want to see the broad variety of this family, you need to make a visit to Central or South America, where most of the 300+ species are found. Hummers are the smallest birds in the world, although some of the largest species are bigger than sparrows. Interestingly, there is so much variety between species in this family that there are more than 100 genera with most containing only a few species.

Hummingbirds don't establish pair bonds, and as we all know, females do all the work of nest building and rearing of the young. Both male and female hummingbirds are territorial. Males select territories rich in food sources that



will attract many females. They are fiercely aggressive in defending territory from other males. Females select territories that have the best nesting sites and will defend against others that come

in to feed. Usually there are 2 eggs per clutch, and it is common for a female to raise two broods per year. The brilliant colors found in males come from a complex feather structure which reflects color only when oriented directly facing the observer. Otherwise, they appear to be the brown or gray color of the actual pigment. Males will "flash" this color as part of defending their territories, as well as during courtship displays.

Since hummingbirds readily come to feeders, we have a good opportunity for close observation of their unique ability to fly in just about any direction they choose, and their outright aggressiveness toward each other in defending their food. Nectar is a large portion of the diet, although small invertebrates are also taken, especially during nesting and feeding of young. Insects are taken both by hawking and by gleaning from bark or leaves. Hummers are known to visit sapsucker wells both for the sap and for the insects it attracts. They also are known to "make the rounds" in a predictable pattern, visiting the same patches of flowers or feeders in the same sequence throughout the day.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Zanjero Park Burrowing Owl Project

On Tuesday, September 13, 2011, Greg Clark of Wild at Heart joins us at 7pm at the Gilbert Community Center, 130 N. Oak Street, to introduce our Together Green grant project to install a Burrowing Owl Habitat at Zanjero Park, 3785 S. Lindsay Road (Lindsay Road, South of Loop 202), Gilbert. We'll need your help at the end of October to dig in the 100 burrows as well as your help caring for the owls onsite before their release in spring 2012. Ask all your owl questions, visit with a Burrowing Owl and sign up for a volunteer opportunity to help your feathered neighbors! We're still looking for additional funding sources for such things as fencing to protect the owls before they are released and signage in the park. This should be a fun and rewarding project and we're honored to have the opportunity to be involved.

AZFO Announces Research Grants for 2011

This fall the Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) (www.azfo.org/index) will for the first time make individual grants available for research on the state avifauna. They are particularly but not exclusively interested in projects investigating the status, distribution, and identification of the state birdlife. Up to two grants, each worth up to \$1000, will be awarded in 2011. Interested applicants are asked to visit the AZFO Gale Monson Research Grants web page at : <http://www.azfo.org/grants/grants.html> for additional information, including the grant application form, and are encouraged to discuss potential research projects with Dr. Pierre Deviche (deviche@asu.edu), phone: 480-965-0726, Chair of the grant application selection committee. Complete grant applications, including at least one letter of recommendation, must be received by September 1, 2011. Awards will be announced by October 1, 2011

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 January through March, 2011.



Bass Pro Shops for use of their meeting room for monthly Desert Rivers Board meetings in the Phoenix store, Dobson Road and the 202 Freeway.

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



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 the Northeast corner of Baseline and Gilbert Roads in Mesa.

Corporate Members : Salt River Project, Bass Pro Shops, Wild Birds Unlimited, Arizona Medical Network

A New Viewpoint

Article : Joy Dingley,
Photos : Cindy Marple

Field guides often give you views of birds in flight, and they sometimes give you views of the underneath of birds, especially of warblers. That makes sense, you want to identify the birds that fly over or past you and you need to know what a warbler looks like from underneath as they spend so much time in the trees above you. The vast majority of bird illustrations and photos that you see in field guides, however, show you the bird from the side. There's one viewpoint that gets overlooked – the view from the rear. Here are four photos, can you tell each of these familiar birds from behind?

This first bird is fairly easy – in fact this is the most familiar view you will have of the bird. Notice the checker-board black and white pattern which changes into zebra like stripes. The tail isn't sticking out, it is very firmly wedged against the branch and the bird is upright against that branch. All very helpful clues.

The second bird is much more difficult. Look carefully though and you will notice the unmistakable talons of a bird of prey. Whichever raptor this is has very long wings in comparison with its body – the bird is also very low over water and could that be a fish in its talons? When you are not sure of field marks the behavior of a bird can often help you track down the identity.

Number three is quite a scruffy fellow, all his feathers are ruffled so we left in the head to give you a start. A long tail, long toes, long beak, -this bird is made for running and grabbing and stabbing. Any ideas?

Now if you could see **bird number four** from the side you wouldn't have any problems identifying it. A dove, obviously, that visits us in the summer and loves the flowers and fruit of cacti. Maybe you can guess which dove from the description but have you ever noticed the startling red eye and blue eye ring before?

Number five is fairly easy as well, a bird that wades in water and is grey-blue in color. But this is an unusual view of the bird. If it was your first look at it ever would you know whether the bird has a black upturned beak and is facing you or would you decide that it has a black feather at the back of the head?

KIDS PAGE



- (5) Great Blue Heron
- (4) White-winged Dove
- (3) Greater Roadrunner
- (2) Osprey
- (1) Gila Woodpecker



Kid's Club News

Our season came to an end in April when we had our end of year bird walk and picnic at Audubon Arizona. First we went birding on the north side of the Rio Salado on Central Avenue – we found quite a few species including a Greater Roadrunner who was running off with a lizard. Then we crossed over to the Audubon Nature Center where we searched for macro-invertebrates in the pond. While we were there, Kathryn and Ty managed to find some baby fish that proved the fish in the pond at the nature center were breeding.

During the year we've studied migration, bird calls, bird identification, bird diets and breeding behavior, all at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. In December we held our own version of the Christmas count and raised money for Liberty Wildlife. The Early

Birds are now sponsoring Bailey the Turkey Vulture. All our Early Birds know how yucky Turkey Vultures can be and the latest news we have of Bailey confirms that. Claudia Kirscher reports that Bailey vomited all over her shoes recently and despite trying to wash them, Claudia eventually had to throw the shoes out because she couldn't get the smell to go away! He doesn't seem very grateful for our sponsorship does he?

There will be the usual summer challenge available for the Early Birds, something to keep them thinking about birds during the school vacation. We'll be starting up again in October and if you are interested in joining or in trying your hand at our summer challenge contact Joy at joy.dingley@cox.net .

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Chandler, AZ 85226

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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, October through March, 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** Sats. November thru April 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.

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MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

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

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

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

Desert Rivers Audubon Society is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization incorporated in Arizona, formed to provide environmental education and conservation opportunities to valley residents and advocate for our environment. For information on planned giving or bequests to the chapter, please contact Krys Hammers at krys.hammers@cox.net

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Roosevelt Dam - Mike Rupp