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Osprey at Gilbert Preserve - Denny Green
Partnerships

Desert Rivers is very fortunate to have so many mutually beneficial partnerships. We have worked on projects and programs with the City of Chandler, Environmental Education Center, the Town of Gilbert, the Riparian Institute, Boyce Thompson Arboretum, National Audubon and the Audubon family, Arizona Game & Fish, the Phoenix Coyotes, our local Wild Birds Unlimited store, Wild at Heart, and last but certainly not least, Liberty Wildlife. These partnerships continue to help us to fulfill our mission: To educate and inspire our community to preserve and protect birds, wildlife and their habitats.

Desert Rivers was awarded an Urban Wildlife grant from Arizona Game & Fish. We will partner with the City of Chandler to stage our first ever “Tour de Bird” on October 27. The public will be able to tour backyard bird habitats and see that you can have a lush urban landscape that will attract birds, and be pleasing for human inhabitants as well. Not only do these landscapes help to mitigate the effects of development by planting the same desert plants found before development, but they conserve water that can help us retain our state’s beautiful riparian areas.

We have a mutually beneficial relationship with the City of Chandler. We provide birdwalks at the Veterans Oasis Park once a month. We get the opportunity to meet the public at this venue and educate and inspire them to appreciate birds; and the city gets to provide recreational activity at their park. We also completed a monthly survey of bird populations at the park that allowed the city to create a bird list for the area. Additionally, the Environmental Education Center located at Veterans Oasis Park gives us the facility to teach Beginning and Intermediate Birding and Building a Bird Habitat classes.

We also adopted the Hummingbird Habitat at Desert Breeze Park. We maintain this area for the city and it gives us the opportunity to demonstrate a good habitat to attract birds, particularly hummingbirds. The Mayor awarded us a certificate for putting in the 2nd most volunteer hours in the Adopt-A-Park program last year. This spring we planted the wall there to spruce up the habitat to be a stop on our Tour de Bird garden tour.

We worked in partnership with the Town of Gilbert and several “cat” groups, with support from National Audubon, Audubon Arizona and Maricopa Audubon to remove the feral cat colony that existed at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Last spring, unlike the prior year, Black-necked Swans and Killdeer were able to successfully fledge clutches of young. We also are grateful to the Town of Gilbert for the foresight to create this wonderful riparian preserve, another venue for monthly birdwalks.

The Town of Gilbert was a partner with Arizona Game & Fish and Wild at Heart that helped us to create 100 burrows for Burrowing Owls at San Jose Park. We were fortunate to be granted $2,500 towards the project from the Together Green partnership between Toyota and National Audubon. Over 850 volunteer hours were dedicated to this project to establish a colony of Burrowing Owls at this location. Not only were we successful to release owls into the park, but the local community seems to feel ownership of this area and will continue to watch out for the owls and their burrows. We will continue to provide monthly talks at the park about the owls and the project. We had 75 in attendance for our first program.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum has hosted our children’s group, the Early Birds, as well as our birding program for blind children. We also participate in their Bye-Bye Buzzards day and their Welcome Back Buzzards Day. It is such a great area to place to see and hear birds year round.

A grant from the Phoenix Coyotes allowed us to purchase a trailer that we use to transport our gear – binoculars, signs, tents and our mobile book store to all of our events.

Not only is our local Wild Birds Unlimited store a corporate member of our chapter, but they also participate in our Bird Habitat program by distributing the habitat sign. Folks can qualify their habitats online and pay for a sign. When they pick up the sign at the store, Dave and MaryAnne also give them a free gift. Wild Birds Unlimited also will host a roll out of our new mobile app, “101 Places to Bird in the Phoenix Area.” They have been active members of our chapter, having served on our Board and raised money for the Burrowing Owl project.

Lastly, Liberty Wildlife has been one of our very best partners from the day that we started our chapter. We were able to release a Great Horned Owl at our very first meeting, which has boded well for the success of our chapter. They participate in every birdwalk that we do by bringing their education birds to show and educate our guests. They also present a program for us annually. Last year we had 138 attend the program that they presented. Every guest that sees their birds is totally entranced. We share a similar mission and these joint programs help us to tell people about the birds that we care about.

If you noticed the common theme in these partnerships, it’s community. These partnerships allow us to serve not just birds, but our community. They help us to educate and inspire our community. We benefit from them. Our partners also benefit. Ultimately, the community benefits.

www.desertriversaudubon.org

Audubon at Home

Krys Hammers

Home Habitats

When I was young I remember that my grandmother’s lawn and flower garden was exceptionally beautiful. Of course this was in farmland in Iowa. She had an award winning rose garden and I was particularly fond of the huge peony blossoms. When my family moved to Colorado, we took some of the stock of those same peony plants to plant at our new house. The same plant followed my parents to each house that they owned. Many years later that plant was divided up with some going to my brother and some coming to me. I proudly planted that bit of family tradition in my yard only to watch it shrivel and die in the Arizona summer.

While I was disappointed that I can’t carry on that same tradition, I have come to appreciate and enjoy native desert plants. Since I have a bit of black thumb, I have had the opportunity to experiment with many different native and desert-adapted plants. I have discovered that without grass and poonies, you can still have a lush and colorful garden year-round, with little maintenance, and attract birds to your yard too. To demonstrate this, my yard will be one of ten stops on this year’s Tour de Bird. This event is a combination of private and public gardens that demonstrate that you can have attractive gardens that make a good habitat for birds.

To right and below:
Examples of how desert plants and trees can decorate a yard beautifully and provide a habitat for bird species. Check out this topic on the DRAS website for information on The DRAS Yard Habitat Program.

Another stop on the tour will be the Hummingbird Habitat at Desert Breeze Park. We have been maintaining the habitat for almost two years now and received an award for having the 2nd highest number of hours donated. Other public gardens include Veterans Oasis Park and the Gilbert Riparian Preserve. Also on the tour are the home gardens of the Walter Thurbers, Sam Campana, Founding Director of Audubon Arizona, Judy Tobar and Russ Haughney.

The tour will be Oct 27. Tickets can be purchased in advance online and picked up at the Wild Birds Unlimited store or can be purchased at any of the stops. For more information please see our website: www.desertriversaudubon.org.
In this quarter’s column there are three issues that I would like to bring to your attention. First, I want to give you an update on the feral cat situation at the Riparian Preserve at Gilbert Water Ranch (GWR). Second, I want to draw your attention to one of the propositions on this fall’s General Election ballot. Third, I want to connect bird conservation funding to the mess our federal elected officials have made in Washington, highlighting what is left undone in the appropriations process and what the threat of sequestration means to those of us who care about the environment and wildlife conservation. With all three issues I have web resources for you should you desire more information.

As most of you know, we have had a feral cat problem at GWR. Since November 2010 we have trapped and removed over 125 cats from the Preserve. If you saw a recent Arizona Republic article, (http://www.azcentral.com/community/gilbert/articles/20120717/gilbert-feral-cats-find-home-sanctuary.html), there was a different number given. Our number is correct. Last summer we had the population of feral cats down to only a handful or less. This spring we observed increased numbers, more like ten to twelve feral cats. Jennie Rambo, the Park Naturalist, began trapping again. This summer she called and asked for some help and my son Aaron and I have assisted for the last several weeks. What we have observed, and discovered, is troubling. The feral cat advocates have begun surreptitiously feeding the cats again. We have found several locations where they are distributing both dry and wet food. We have found camouflaged five gallon water containers, as well as one other container that looks like it was used to transport feral cats into the preserve. We have met with town staff and they have pledged to aggressively enforce the new ordinances that are in place that outlaw feeding the cats.

We have also learned that feral cats are being fed at the Lutheran church and school adjacent to the Preserve on the south side. Feral cats are being fed at the medical office complex to the north of the Preserve across Guadalupe Road. Town officials are attempting to get these feeding locations shut down.

So, what can we do? Well, we must stay committed to our policy of no feral cats in the Preserve. We will continue to trap and remove cats as long as they are observed at GWR. If you see a cat during your visits there, report it by email to Riparian Preserve staff members on the Riparian Institute website (http://www.riparianinstitute.org). If you have some extra time and want to help with the trapping, Jennie would like some volunteers during the day to help trap. Those traps have to be watched so they aren’t stolen by feral cat advocates.

As you know, the General Election ballot has two propositions, Prop 112 and Prop 120. I believe that most people would like to see the land in Arizona protected. Both propositions deal with water and land conservation. Proposition 120 would take away the power of the State Legislature to allocate public lands for future use. Proposition 112 would end the use of state parks for non-park purposes. I urge you to vote no on both propositions.

Finally, if you haven’t paid attention to the budget mess in Washington, here is a great summary of current conservation work left undone by Congress as they go home to campaign. It is from our friends at American Bird Conservancy, (http://www.abcbirds.org/pdfs/FY_2013_Appropriations_Update_AL_sh.pdf) There is also a really nice explanation of how sequestration will affect the environment and conservation issues. What a nightmare!
Tribute to Gale Monson
1 August 1912 - 19 February 2012

Though his Arizona friends bemoaned their loss, it was my good fortune that Gale Monson was transferred to the Washington, D.C. headquarters of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in the early 1960s. He made a lot of new friends there, some of whom were to become friends and mentors of mine when my family moved to Northern Virginia in 1967. I never met Gale in Virginia, but our mutual friends connected us when I came to Tucson for graduate school in 1976.

Gale was born in Munich, North Dakota in August, 1912 only 15 miles south of the International Boundary and was raised on a wheat farm near Argusville just north of Fargo. The farm house and barn were protected from the cold northwest winds by a dense stand of trees planted by the homesteader. These trees were the only cover in an otherwise treeless shortgrass prairie and they sheltered many exotic migrants—colorful warblers, vireos, orioles, and grosbeaks—as they traveled to and from their breeding grounds in the boreal forests of Canada. These exciting birds caught the attention of a young farm boy who was already interested in the natural world. They must have served to widen his world; after all, these birds didn’t nest on the prairie, but where did they nest and why did they appear on the farm every spring and fall? It is likely he found the answers to those questions long before he reached North Dakota State University in Fargo.

By the age of about 12, he began a journal to record his bird sightings on the farm and he continued it with few interruptions for over eighty years. When I visited him in Albuquerque recently we were talking about one of the first trips we took together—to Redfield Canyon in the Galiuro Mountains east of Tucson. He said, “Do you see that third volume on the lowest shelf? Why don’t you bring it over to me.”

He opened the book, and turned right to the pages describing that trip. There was a color photograph of the impressive canyon walls. There was a list of the birds we encountered, the weather we experienced, the roads and 4X4 paths we took to get in there, and notes about our campsite. As he read a passage, my memories of that day came flooding back.

Typically, he took me to places that were not listed in my copy of Jim Lane’s Birding Southeastern Arizona, although one spring morning we did go to the famous Sonora Creek Sanctuary in Patagonia where we found a Yellow-throated Vireo, an Eastern species that had seldom been seen in Arizona! In those days, Gale wasn’t giving me a birding tour of this region; instead, he was taking me to places where the bird life was unknown or little known as a part of his larger quest to document Arizona birds.

In later years I had moved to Phoenix for a job, but Gale kept me involved in his pursuits. Not long after my move north, Gale told me that he and Professor Steve Russell were researching a book on birds in the state of Sonora, Mexico. Gale asked me to accompany him on several of their exploratory expeditions. We inventoried birds from the Sea of Cortez to the high pine-covered Sierra Huachinera on the border with Chihuahua and from the Rio Magdalena in the north to the Rio Mayo near the border with Sinaloa.

Many of the streams in the mountains had no bridges, only fords. I remember one crossing of the Rio Bavispe, in northeastern Sonora, where cottonwoods held Rose-throated Becard and Streak-backed Oriole nests. This Eastern kid was concerned that Gale’s old Ford pickup truck would flood attempting to ford the swollen river, but we made it easily. His considerable experience had paid off, as it would again and again throughout the data gathering phase of the book, The Birds of Sonora, published by the University of Arizona Press in 1988.

In December 1988, Gale arranged to conduct a Christmas Bird Count around one of the watering holes his men had built when he was the manager of the vast desert county southwest of Tucson. This was no small matter because he needed permits from the US Air Force to cross the Barry Goldwater Bombing Range. Our base of operations was at Heart Tank in the Sierra Pinta.

On the night before the count the sky was clear, so clear that stars by the billions spangled the moonless dome over us. We sat on stones around an ironwood campfire. “Eight hundred eighty thousand acres on the Cabeza Prieta Game Range,” he said, and we are the only ones in it.”

The next morning we found a wintering Gray Vireo near our camp. It was just where Gale knew it would be: in an Elephant Tree, Bursera microphylla, where it was feeding on fruits. This was probably the only Gray Vireo reported that year on Christmas Bird Counts in the United States as most of its winter range is in northwest México.

Gale’s first job was in 1934 with the United States Indian Service, surveying and mapping range conditions by horseback on what is now the Tohono O’odham Reservation west of Tucson. He once told me of a day he rode his horse to the top of Table Top Mountain west of Casa Grande just because he wanted to see what was up there!

Not long ago I wrote to Gale and told him that not a day goes by that I don’t think of him and the adventures we had together. He taught me how to get along in the desert without breaking my neck or stepping on a rattlesnake. But, more than that, he taught me by his example. Yes, he was an exemplary field ornithologist, a first-class all-around naturalist, and a well above average writer who could, in few words, convey the beauty and enchantment of his beloved desert home. But he was also even-tempered, sotow to anger, and quick to see the humor in an otherwise difficult situation. All who knew him will recall the twinkle in his eye. I can see it now....
The Insidious, Nidicolous Parasites of Arizona’s Bald Eagles

The Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch Program was initiated by the U.S. Forest Service in 1976 with the help of local Audubon Society members to protect desert-nesting bald eagles. The program is now coordinated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AZGFD) with input from the Southwest Bald Eagle Management Committee.

There are many threats to nesting bald eagles in Arizona including loss of habitat, disease, human disturbance, declining fish populations, lead poisoning, monofilament fishing line, excessive heat, and severe storms. Two ridiculous (nest inhabiting) ectoparasites—the Mexican chicken bug (Haematomyces aestivalis) and an unidentified species of soft tick (Argas sp)—are also threats to eagle nesting success.

All birds, including raptors, have their complement of arthropod ectoparasites including various species of louse flies, bird lice, mites, fleas, ticks, and true bugs like the Mexican chicken bug. Most of these parasites remain on their bird hosts almost continually. However, ticks and bugs usually hide in nesting material when not actively feeding.

The Mexican chicken bug belongs to the Family Cimicidae, which includes bed bugs, swallow bugs, and bat bugs. Like all cimicids, Mexican chicken bugs are blood-feeders in all their life stages from newly hatched nymph to breeding adults. Feeding occurs mostly at night. The bugs congregate mainly in areas with few feathers such as around the eyes and nasal areas and the upper parts of the legs. In addition to domestic chickens and turkeys, Mexican chicken bugs have been found on a number of raptors including California condors, turkey vultures, golden eagles, red-tailed hawks, prairie falcons, great horned owls, and barn owls. Adult bugs can live in nest debris for months without feeding.

The first documented report of Mexican chicken bugs on bald eagles was from a nest along the Salt River in the mid-1980s. Researchers estimated that the nest examined may have contained between 21,000 and 31,000 bugs, and the infestation was blamed for the deaths of two eaglets. A barn owl observed in the vicinity may have transported the bugs to the nest, but this was only speculated. The study also ruled out poultry prey as a source of the infestation.

Approximately 12 eaglet deaths have been attributed to bug infestations since the beginning of the Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch Program. Most infestations are in south or southwest-facing cliff nests warmer microhabitats. The blood-feeding bugs cause nesting deaths through direct dehydration (blood loss) or through severe irritation causing the eaglets to abandon nests and fail to rear their deaths.

AZGFD nest monitors treat eaglets from infested nests with permethrin insecticide, which has very low toxicity to mammals and birds. However, applications of diatomaceous earth seem to control the bugs better than do the permethrin treatments. The non-toxic diatomaceous earth particles abrade the bugs’ exoskeletal cuticle causing them to dehydrate.

Soft ticks (Argas sp.) have also been a serious problem at one eagle nest site along the Salt River. The huge nest that was used for a number of years by eagles was in a large cottonwood tree. AZGFD personnel discovered that the ticks were using old termite galleries in a dead branch as a refuge. Despite numerous control attempts with pesticides and an attempt to fill the termite galleries, the tick infestation persisted and was responsible for at least 4 eaglet deaths in the past four years. Each year, the birds died between 6 and 10-weeks of age either from possible tick paralysis caused by tick saliva, or from the eaglets abandoning the nest.

AZGFD personnel obtained permission from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service last year to destroy the nests. Last August, Game and Fish personnel constructed two new artificial nests in nearby trees. An eagle pair has begun using one of these new nests, and it’s hoped that the tick problem is solved. Although low numbers of ticks are also present in a few cliff nest sites, they don’t seem to be severe enough to impact nesting success.

Ectoparasites are a relatively uncommon cause of eagle nesting deaths, but any deaths that can be prevented help this once endangered bird back to fully recovered status. Since the Arizona Bald Eagle Nest Watch Program began in 1978, the number of breeding pairs of desert-nesting bald eagles has grown from 30 to well over 40—a success by any measure.

*There is an excellent Arizona Game and Fish Department video on YouTube of the nest monitoring and removal. Search for the AZGFD’s YouTube video Eagle Nest Down.

Desert Rivers takes a limited number of observers on a Arizona Game and Fish Dept. Bald Eagle banding trip to the Verde River or Salt River in April. Check our field trip schedule then to reserve a place on this special trip.

www.desertriversaudubon.org
Today (Jul 10, 2012) 10 organizations filed suit in federal court in Alaska challenging the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement's approval of Shell Oil Company's inadequate oil spill response plans for the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas. Statement of Audubon President and CEO David Yarnold:

"What kind of science says oil goes well with ice? It makes about as much sense as ordering a glass of crude on the rocks. In this case, the government was just plain nuts." Audubon experts are available to discuss the suit, Shell's spill response plans, and Arctic resources. The plaintiffs in this case are Audubon, Alaska Wilderness League, Center for Biological Diversity, Greenpeace, Natural Resources Defense Council, Ocean Conservancy, Oceana, Pacific Environment, REDDOL and Sierra Club. They are represented by Earthjustice.

Full Statement of Coalition

A coalition of conservation organizations filed a lawsuit in Alaska federal court today challenging the federal government's approval of Shell Oil Company's Chukchi and Beaufort Sea spill response plans.

These plans, approved by the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement (BSEE), describe how Shell says it will prepare for and respond to a major oil spill caused by exploratory drilling in America's Arctic Ocean. Shell's drill rigs are headed for the Arctic right now and could be in place in a matter of weeks. A decision in this lawsuit would be the first in a challenge to offshore oil spill response plans in the United States.

"We have been forced to court to make sure the Arctic Ocean is protected and Shell is prepared, as mandated by law. BSEE rubber-stamped plans that rely on unreliable assumptions, include equipment that has never been tested in Arctic conditions, and ignore the very real possibility that a spill could continue through the winter. The agency has not met minimum legal standards to be sure that Shell's plans could be effective and that Shell has sufficient boats, resources, and spill responders to remove a worst-case spill in the Arctic Ocean to the maximum extent practicable. Even after Deepwater Horizon, Interior Secretary Salazar brushed aside concerns about Shell's spill response capabilities, stating recently that there is not going to be an oil spill."

"The American people deserve more. There have been no tests of spill response equipment in US Arctic waters since 2000 and those equipment tests were 'a failure.' Today, Shell relies on much of that same equipment, and bases its plans on the assumption that it will clean up more than 90 percent of any spilled oil. Even in relatively favorable conditions, less than 10 percent of spilled oil was recovered after the Deepwater Horizon and Exxon Valdez spills. In the Arctic, sea ice, harsh weather, high seas, darkness and wind may render even that level of cleanup impossible."

When pressed to explain this assumption, Shell quickly backpedaled and said it will not 'recover,' but only 'encounter' spilled oil – despite the legal requirement to 'remove' spilled oil and the fact that the company has used the unrealistic 30 percent projection to justify its choice of vessels and other equipment to protect the shoreline. The company similarly appears to be back tracking on commitments it made to the Coast Guard for vessel safety and preparedness. Similarly, BSEE violated the law when it approved spill response plans that do not describe all available spill response resources. For example, Shell has publicly touted its Arctic containment system, but the spill plans approved by BSEE not only do not include that system, but state that they fail to explain why Shell believes the system will work. No one has ensured that the company is prepared for a late season spill that could continue unabated through the winter. There is a very real possibility that winter sea ice could close in and shut down spill response leaving a blowout uncontrolled for eight or more months."

BSEE also signed off on the response plans without a basic understanding of the consequences of the spill response choices Shell made. For example, the agency never considered the effects of Shell's proposal to apply dispersants in the Arctic Ocean, including threats to fish, birds, and marine mammals, among them the endangered Bowhead Whale."

"As this lawsuit moves forward, we will continue to seek opportunities to work with local Arctic communities, government entities, industry, and others toward a shared vision for the Arctic, and we will not be distracted or intimidated by aggressive or litigious actions taken by companies like Shell. Nor will we allow them to take shortcuts around established review processes and standards. We cannot allow the future of the Arctic Ocean to be risked on the hope that nothing will go wrong."

David Yarnold: Shell Oil puts Arctic Wildlife at Risk

Published: Jul 30, 2012

If you thought the pictures of scum-covered Brown Pelicans in the Gulf of Mexico were heartbreaking, just wait for the first drilling disaster in Alaska’s frozen arctic waters and coastline.

We know so little about this deep freeze of an environment that America’s best scientists and experts say they’re not sure how to fix it if we break it.

Their nightmare scenario is a BP-like blowout in an ice-locked sea. Imagine these pictures: a helpless army suited up like Michelin men trying to rescue dying ducks, loons and polar bears from oil-slicked ice floes. The Obama administration is on the verge of giving Shell Oil the green light to begin drilling operations in the icy Beaufort Sea off Alaska’s northern coast less than 15 miles from the fragile Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. It appears Interior Secretary Ken Salazar is having second thoughts.

Why? It’s not safe enough for even BP to drill and we know what their safety standards are like. BP, yes BP, announced last week that it’s calling it quits on a $1.5 billion project that was 14 years in the making in the same area.

Why? According to BP, the project “does not meet our test” for safety standards and it would cost too much to make it so. So what does BP know that Shell doesn’t?

Oh, right, Experience, at the expense of the Gulf Coast. The Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010. America’s largest marine oil spill.

Shell is hardly off to a confidence-building start in Alaska. Last weekend, the company lost control of one of its primary drilling ships before the vessel had even left the harbor. The 571-foot drilling rig, Noble Discoverer, slipped anchor and came dangerously close to running aground before it was stopped.

And what about the Coast Guard requirement that Shell’s oil spill recovery barge be able to withstand a worst-in-100-years storm in some of the most extreme sea conditions in the world? Shell recently disclosed its 37-year-old barge could withstand a storm that might be the worst in a decade. Maybe.

And Shell has revealed that its drilling fleet can’t meet the air pollution limits it already agreed to when the Environmental Protection Agency granted its required permits. Shell has known it couldn’t meet the standards since 2010. If Shell’s ships can’t meet pollution standards, if its rescue barges are sub-standard for Arctic conditions, if it can’t control a drilling rig in a calm harbor and if it can’t clean up an oil spill by following the rules how can Shell possibly guarantee it can handle an oil spill in a notoriously hostile environment with massive waves and gale force winds?

The Government Accountability Office, the independent investigative arm of Congress, has warned that even with the precautions that Shell Oil has promised, those “capabilities do not completely mitigate some of the environmental and logistical risks associated with the remoteness and environment of the region.” Translation: we haven’t learned anything from the BP oil disaster.

Here’s what’s at risk. If there is a spot on Earth as critical as the future of our wild birds as the Gulf of Mexico, it is probably the Arctic. Hundreds of bird species arrive every spring from six continents and all four North American flyways, mate and raise their young in one of the world’s most prolific bird nurseries. And many of America’s remaining polar bears make their winter dens along the coasts while the last herds of thousands of caribou roam the tundra. Sounds like nature at its purest, right?

This is really an easy choice. This is about choosing our kids and creation over breaking the ice for oil we can get from other, saner places.
Citizen Scientist OwlWatchers Keep Close Eye on Zanjero Park’s Burrowing Owls

New wild Burrowing Owls have joined the remaining rehabilitated owls released into the Zanjero Park artificial burrow habitat this past spring. The current owly neighborhood supports eight birds.

The burrowing owl habitat installed by over 100 community volunteers this past fall was made possible by a grant by Together:Green to Desert Rivers Audubon in partnership with Wild At Heart, the Town of Gilbert, Arizona Game & Fish Department, and ADOT. Rehabilitated Burrowing Owls were released in spring by Wild At Heart into the habitat of artificial burrows.

A dedicated crew of volunteer citizen scientists count and assess the owls as well as note damage or vandalism at the park. Volunteers will be available Saturday, August 25, 2012, 8pm to guide the public through the habitat and report their observations. This educational event is free, but please bring water—it’s still very hot out there.

Stacy Burleigh (below) scans for the resident burrowing owls to show OwlWalk & Talk attendees at Zanjero Park.

OwlWatch volunteers review the previous log to compare owl status. (2nd from top)

Another burrowing owl stretches its wings before being put into the pre-release tent behind Greg Clark. (Top)

Volunteers from the Phoenix Zoo Teen Conservation Corps. (above) get down & dirty constructing release tent @ Zanjero Park, Gilbert. Zanjero Park is located at 3795 South Lindsay Rd., Gilbert.

Desert Rivers Projects

Maintaining the Hummingbird Habitat at Desert Breeze Park

Volunteers with Desert Rivers Audubon celebrate one year of pruning, planting and maintaining the Hummingbird Habitat @ Desert Breeze Park in association with the City of Chandler Dept of Parks & Recreation Adopt-a-Park Program.

Volunteers at the habitat include Viraj Gupta, Anne Koch, Victor Peterson, Joy Dingley, Krys Hammers, and Eileen Kane.

DRAS President Krys Hammers receiving award from City of Chandler officials for one year of volunteer service at the Desert Breeze Park Hummingbird Habitat.

Burrowing owls venture forth as the pre-release enclosure is uncovered and the owls are finally released into Zanjero Park in late April.
Field Identification of the Sea of Cortez in Southeast Arizona

Roger Tory Peterson famously jabbed his portraits of birds with needles to indicate key features essential for identification. Biogeographical affinities can be highlighted in similar ways, although the arrows might shift on the map, since some are actually living birds.

In Southeastern Arizona there are physical components that identify all of our biogeographical regions. Topography and plant communities are as important in determining the ecology of a landscape as bill, wing, and foot shape are in placing birds into the correct family. But no field character is more critical than the species of birds that either live in or visit an area.

Birds: For me no bird evokes the Sea of Cortez more than an Elegant Tern. With over 90 percent of the world’s population breeding on the desert salt pan of little Isla Raza in the Midriff Islands, Elegant Terns are very nearly an endemic species. In May of 2001 I had the very good fortune to visit Isla Raza and personally witness the spectacle of 200,000 birds almost piling the flat surface of the island’s interior. To this day it’s easy to recall that whirring, screeching living blanket of white, ringed and besiegled by a dark perimeter of hungry Heermann’s Gulls.

Two months later I found a lone Elegant Tern at the Avra Valley Ponds west of Tucson. Just seeing that single bird brought back the whole Isla Raza experience. There had been two previous records over a decade earlier from the old, long-since emptied, Wastewater Treatment Pond off Camino del Cerro. More recently in 2009 Elegant Terns put in an appearance at Tucson’s Lakeside Park.

Not all Elegant Tern records in Southeast Arizona come from the greater Tucson area. In 2001 another Elegant Tern dipped into the Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area north of Douglas a few days after the Avra Valley bird, and in 2009 Elegant Terns were simultaneously discovered at Patagonia Lake and the Benson Sewage Ponds a day before they showed up at Tucson’s Lakeside Park. 2010 saw Elegant Terns setting down in Patagonia Lake, as well as 100 miles north in the greater Phoenix area.

From Least through Caspian, in truth any tern in Southeast Arizona probably originates from the Sea of Cortez. Terns have prodigious powers of flight.

So, of course, do almost all shorebirds. Before arriving here most of our shorebirds fatten up on the beaches and estuaries of what many marine ecologists consider the richest gulf in the world. For these birds, too, a few-hundred-mile flight across waterless Sonoran Desert is probably not much of a stretch. Especially if they’re en route to pot holes on the north slope of Alaska. The majority of Arizona’s shorebirds are also emblematic of the Sea of Cortez.

Avra Valley Ponds and Lakeshore Parke but two of many habitats in Tucson that are similar to the Sea of Cortez to the south. In the greater Phoenix metropolitan area, the Gilbert Riparian Preserve, the Glendale Recharge Ponds, future 91st Ave Wetlands, Lower River Road Ponds, and the lakes are the best places to find the species mentioned above.
Our Volunteer for this quarter is also the Secretary of our Desert Rivers Audubon chapter. Nancy Eichorst has worked tirelessly with us wherever we've needed her for several years. We've seen her working at our meetings, in our bookstore, and out leading bird walks for us at our monthly Free Family Bird Walk days at the Gilbert Riparian Preserve and Chandler's Veterans Oasis Park. Nancy works in the field of Human Resources, and holds a Bachelor's degree in the same field from Ottawa University. Although she's lived all over the country, she was a native of northern California during her formative years. She began birding in the early 1990's, when a neighbor friend, other wise known to her as an "adopted grandparent," gave her a Peterson's Field Guide to the Birds, which she still uses today. Nancy says her passion is nature in the form of birds and wildlife, and birding provides a great way to enjoy the outdoors. She loves traveling, learning from others and teaching and sharing that knowledge. She's enjoyed her Audubon experience, especially our phenomenal speakers and programs, and working with people with the same interests. Audubon has furnished her with a great opportunity to grow her interests in birding, the environment and ecology, and to give back to the community. Get to know Nancy; She's a very special volunteer!

AZFO Annual Meeting
Lake Havasu City, October 26-28 2012

If you enjoy observing, surveying, or conducting research on Arizona's birds, plan to attend the Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO) annual state meeting. This year it will be held at the Hampton Inn at 245 London Bridge Rd. in Lake Havasu City on Arizona’s "West Coast." Both members and nonmembers are invited to attend this enjoyable and educational gathering. The meeting will honor the contributions to Arizona birdlife of Gale Monson, who passed away earlier this year, both during the Saturday session and the Saturday evening dinner and program. The Saturday session will feature presentations on changing bird status and field research in Arizona, plus reports and future plans for the many AZFO activities. Anyone interested in giving a 15-minute oral or a poster presentation on original avian research, surveys or other pertinent Arizona endeavors should see the Call for Papers and Posters announcement for more details.

On Friday afternoon and Sunday morning you can participate in mini-field expeditions to birding areas in the lower Colorado River valley. More details and meeting registration information (as it becomes available) can be found here:

Tour de Bird
October 27, 2012

Tour de Bird is Desert Rivers Audubon's wildlife habitat garden tour. It highlights both private backyard ecosystems designed to benefit birds and other wildlife, as well as public gardens demonstrating support to bird habitat and migration corridors. The tour features gardens in Chandler, Gilbert and Scottsdale. This event is made possible by a grant from Arizona Game and Fish Department's Heritage Education Fund.

Saturday, October 27, 2012; 8am to 2pm. Volunteer guided tours, plant lists, and onsite ticket purchases available. Tickets: $10. Children 16 and under free. Purchase tickets online as well at: www.desertriversaudubon.org Will Call & map provided. Backpack with children's wildlife education materials and bird guides included with each ticket purchase. Additional backpacks available for a fee.

Check DRAS website for more details, info, changes and additions. Make reservations with Maj Anderson at birdmadmaj@gmail.com

Owl Walk & Talk at Zanjero Park, Gilbert Sat, August 25, 5:30pm – 7:00pm 3785 South Lindsay Rd., Gilbert. Desert Rivers Audubon OwlWatch coordinator Stacey Burleigh will lead a tour of the Burrowing Owl habitat at Zanjero Park. Meet us in the park parking lot. Contact Stacy Burleigh, stacymb@cox.net.

Field Trip to Kachina Wetlands - Flagstaff Fri, August 31, 5:30am – 2:00pm with Kathie Anderson, kathie.coot@cox.net. Start about 5:30am from Scottsdale, pack a lunch and return about 2pm. Walking is flat, but at about 7,000'. Limit 8 participants.

Science Cafe @ Bookmans, Mesa Tue, September 4, 7pm – 8pm Bookmans Entertainment Exchange, 1056 S Country Club Dr. Mesa. Science cafes are live- and lively—events that take place in casual settings such as pubs and coffeehouses, are open to everyone, and feature an engaging conversation with a scientist about a particular topic.

West Valley Field Trip with Bill Grossi, Sat, Sep 8, 2012 Details to follow.

Tending the Hummingbird Habitat, Chandler Sat, Sept. 8, 8am – 10am Hummingbird Habitat at Desert Breeze Park, 660 N. Desert Breeze Parkway, Chandler. Just drop in or contact our volunteer coordinator, Anne Kuch, aridray@gmail.com.

Birds of Tanzania with Cindy Maple, Tue, Sep 11, 7:00pm – 8:30pm Gilbert Community Center, 130 N. Oak Street, Gilbert. Cindy Maple will take us to Tanzania to talk about birds and her travel experience.

Overnight Field Trip to Globe and the Pinal Mountains Sun, Sept 16, 1:30pm – Mon, September 17, 5:00pm. Noffsinger Hill Inn B&B, ($125 double occupancy). Limit 8 participants. Please register with Kath at kath.coot@cox.net

Owl Walk & Talk at Zanjero Park, Gilbert Sat, Sept. 22, 5:30pm – 7:00pm Zanjero Park, 3755 South Lindsay Rd., Gilbert Stacy Burleigh, slacymb@cox.net

Science Cafe @ Bookmans, Mesa Tue, October 2, 7pm – 8pm Bookmans Entertainment Exchange, 1056 S Country Club Dr. Mesa

Build Backyard Habitat Workshop Thu, October 4, 6:00pm – 7:30pm Environmental Education Center at Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 East Chandler Heights Road, Chandler. Resident fee: $8 Non-resident fee: $11; Register: https://classregistration.chandleraz.gov/registrationman.sdi

Create Healthy Backyard Ecosystem with Ron Dinchak Tue, October 9, 7:00pm – 8:30pm, Gilbert Community Center, 130 N. Oak Street, Gilbert.

Intro to Birdwatching Wed, October 10, 6:30pm – 7:30pm, Environmental Education Center at Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 East Chandler Heights Rd., Chandler. Resident fee: $12 Non-resident fee: $17; Register: https://classregistration.chandleraz.gov/registrationman.sdi

Chandler Family Birdwalk Sat, Nov 3, 8am – 12pm. Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 E. Chandler Heights Rd., Chandler.

Tour de Bird, Sat, Oct. 27, See information on page 8.

Intermediate Birdwatching Wed, Nov 7, 6:30pm – 7:30pm, Environmental Education Center at Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 East Chandler Heights Rd., Chandler. Instructor: Cindy Maple Resident Fee: $12 Non-resident Fee: $17; Register: https://classregistration.chandleraz.gov/registrationman.sdi

Birds of Texas with Larry Arbanas Tue, November 13, 7:00pm – 8:30pm Gilbert Community Center, 130 N. Oak Street, Gilbert. Larry Arbanas, videographer for National Geographic, will talk on Birds of Texas. Come early to browse our mobile book shop, visit, and discover volunteer opportunities with Desert Rivers Audubon. FREE. Light refreshments served.
Red Knot (Calidris canutus), Wilcox Twin Lakes, Cochise County. This Red Knot was discovered by Lake Mohlman on 18 July 2012 and photographed by Christie Van Cleve on 18 July 2012. Red Knot is a casual fall transient in Arizona with 13 accepted records. Its worldwide population is seriously declining. This is earlier than any previously accepted record. Breeding plumaged adult. Stocky, medium sized shorebird with reddish undertails and stout, straight bill.

Groove-billed Ani (Crotophaga sulcirostris), Peña Blanca Lake, Santa Cruz County. This Groove-billed Ani was first found at Peña Blanca Lake west of Nogales in Santa Cruz County on 19 June 2012 by John Hampshire and Kim Tompkins and was photographed at that time by John Hampshire. After not being reported for a few days, it was relocated nearby at Peña Blanca Spring along the Ruby Road just west of the lake on 23 June by Jim Burns. It was refound and photographed by Dave Stejskal and Laurens Halsey back at the lake on 24 June. Groove-billed Ani is a casual visitor with 18 previous records. Nearly all these records are concentrated into two time windows, either mid-summer (late May to August) or late fall (October to December). So far, this year, this species has not been reported in Arizona and probably never will. Separating Smooth-billed from Groove-billed is very tricky, especially because small billed Smooth-billed Anis can have faint grooves on their bill. The combination of a straight lower mandible without a pronounced gonytylial angle and the extensive bare skin around the eye are probably the best marks for Groove-billed.

Scarlet Tanager (Piranga olivacea), Upper Madera Canyon, Santa Cruz County. This male Scarlet Tanager was reported by David Cuesenberry on 17 June 2012 along the Kent Springs Trail in Madera Canyon. It was photographed by Laurens Halsey on 18 June 2012. This bird was singing on territory and at least once had an altercation with a male Western Tanager. Casual with about twenty-five records for Arizona. Usually less than annual; however, there are eight additional reports pending with the Arizona Bird Committee since 2010. Perhaps increasing?

Glossy Ibis (Plegadis falcinellus), Lake Cochise, Wilcox, Cochise County. This Glossy Ibis was discovered by Dave Stejskal and Mark Stevenson and photographed by Laurens Halsey on 12 June 2012 among a flock of White-faced Ibis and a potential hybrid. It was also photographed on 13 June 2012 by Arlene Ripley. Casual to rare, but apparently increasing visitor to Arizona. Likely more regular than the few records suggest due to difficulty in picking them out of the more widespread and abundant White-faced Ibis flocks and the difficulty of separating them from hybrids. No white feathers on head. Pale blue lines of facial skin from in front of eye to base of upper mandible and from below eye to bottom of the base of lower mandible, dark in between. Rest of facial skin dark gray. Eye dark, not red. In the field, the tarsus appeared gray contrasting with the red meta-tarsal joint. White-faced Ibis legs are all reddish.

Baltimore Oriole (Icterus galbula), Desert Botanical Garden, Maricopa County. This Baltimore Oriole was discovered by Bryan Kel, Ruth Jolly and Jeff Stenshorne on 17 May 2012 and photographed by Jeff Stenshorne and Bryan Kel. Rare migrant. Possibly becoming more regular. About 20 accepted records with three more pending. Adult males are easily separated from Bullock’s Oriole by the solid black head. Hybrids usually have an orange supercilium and more white in the wing coverts.

Scissor-tailed Flycatcher (Tyrannus forficatus), Picture Rocks, Pima County. This Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was discovered and photographed by Jason Danhoff on 27 June 2012. Scissor-tailed Flycatcher is a casual migrant and summer visitor to Arizona. It has nested twice; a pair was found nesting near Dudleyville, and one mated with a Western Kingbird in Camp Verde and produced hybrid young. Though taken with a cell phone, the relevant details of this unmistakable bird can be seen – the pearl gray head, dark wings, and of course the extremely long tail for which this species is named.

Laughing Gull (Leucophaeus atricilla), Wilcox Twin Lakes, Cochise County. This Laughing Gull was discovered by John Higgins and photographed by Christie Van Cleve on 15 May 2012. Only about 20 previous records. This bird is in worn late first cycle plumage and can easily be confused with a worn first cycle Franklin’s Gull that can lack the white in the wing tips as well. Key points on this bird are the poorly defined grayish hood (crisper black half-hood in Franklin’s), gray hindneck and sides of breast (white in Franklin’s) and the long drooping bill (shorter with less droop in Franklin’s). Note also the mottled underwing pattern. Franklin’s has white underwings.

Canada Warbler (Cardellina canadensis), Private Yard in Hidden Valley, Pinal County. This Canada Warbler was discovered and photographed by Nancy Lange on 09 June 2012 in her backyard. One of the rarest “eastern” warblers in Arizona. There are nine previous accepted records, but only two of those from spring. With a good view, a Canada Warbler is essentially unmistakable. Bold white eyering, yellow supraloral, and (most distinctively) short dark streaks form a “necklace” pattern across the upper breast.

White-rumped Sandpiper (Calidris fuscicollis), Lake Cochise, Wilcox, Cochise County. These White-rumped Sandpipers were discovered and photographed by Rick Taylor on 14 May 2012 and by Chris Berens on 22 May 2012. White-rumped Sandpiper is a casual late spring migrant to the state. There are about a dozen previously accepted records. The vast majority of the records have come from Wilcox.
Birding Mesa Electric Park

It may shock you to learn that Mesa’s Electric Park is a perfect close-in site that’s reliable for the most common desert species, plus everyone’s favorite exotic: Rosy-faced Lovebirds. A woman visiting from Mississippi traveled to Phoenix to see the lovebirds, as part of her studies of parrots in the United States. She stepped from the car and scored four life birds in four minutes—those common to us, but exciting to her: Cactus Wren, Curve-billed Thrasher, Abert’s Towhee and Inca Dove. The lovebirds showed up shortly.

Did you know:
- Cactus Wrens puncture the eggs of nearby nesters? It’s thought to be one way to reduce competition for food.
- The Abert’s Towhee is one of the few species to have adapted somewhat to incursive tamarisk?

The Electric Park is the perfect place to compare and study the four common species of urban doves: the ubiquitous Mourning Dove, our charming Inca Dove, the pushy summer White-winged Dove, and the recent invasive Eurasian Collared-Dove. Sometimes, all four species line up along the lower crossbars of the huge electric towers or in the nearby mesquite, better than a field guide illustration to compare sizes, markings, bills and tail shapes.

Did you know:
- The Mourning Dove is most widespread breeding species in Arizona, with breeding behavior observed every month of the year?
- The Eurasian Collared-Dove invasion in the United States started with the release of about fifty birds from a pet store in the Bahamas?

Most walks at the Electric Park include an unexpected fly-over of a Great Blue Heron, plus the not-so-surprising flush of a Cooper’s Hawk. The hawk’s smorgasbord of prey at the park could include Verdins and Gambel’s Quail, House Finches and Gila Woodpeckers, Northern Mockingbirds and several species of sparrows.

Did you know:
- A Gambel’s Quail’s cocky plume is composed of seven feathers?
- The Cherokees fed mockingbirds to their children to encourage them to speak?

The residents that line the edges of the Electric Park have planted a variety of cacti, aloes, desert shrubs and wildflowers. Over the years, these plants have grown to epic proportions and display a super-abundance of flowers in the spring and early summer. Even if there were no birds on site, an April visit is warranted.

The same residents seem unfailingly pleasant and welcoming. Some put out baskets of tree overflow oranges from yard trees. Others have set out benches and bird feeders. Please respect their privacy when peering through your binoculars.

The Electric Park is better known as Dreamland Village, but even then it’s a hidden treasure. A man on a recent field trip confessed that he lived in Mesa for fifty years, but didn’t know of this lovely little wonderland.

The Electric Park runs under the huge power lines a quarter mile north of University Drive, from Higley Road east to 64th Street.

Aerial Photo: Google

www.desertiversaudubon.org

Kathe Anderson
Bird Photo: Cindy Marple
Field Identification of the Sea of Cortez in southeast Arizona

The list goes on.

Locations: Fortunately, most of those microhabitats exist at one or more of Southeastern Arizona’s major impoundments. Look for fishing species like Ospreys at Tucson’s Agua Caliente Park, Perola Blanca Lake, and Patagonia Lake near Nogales. It’s an understatement to say shorebirds flock to Awa Valley Ponds and Lake Cochise at Willcox. The tropical herons usually show up in ponds and lakes with reeds or trees on the banks.

such as Paragonia Lake or even Reid Park in Tucson, while a vagrant Redshank Egret is more apt to be found at a body of water lacking significant cover, such as Tucson's Lakeside Park.

Citizen Science Bird Inventory Training and Expedition in Northern Mexico

Are you an active birder interested in helping to conserve bird populations in the Sky Island Region? Join Sky Island Alliance, the Arizona Coordinated Bird Monitoring Program, and Tucson Audubon Society to inventory bird populations in critical habitats located in Northern Mexico. This is a two-part adventure including a training in September of 2012 and a birding expedition in June of 2013. This is a remarkable opportunity for birders to learn new skills and apply their passion to an area of conservation need.

Part I: on September 14th - 16th 2012
Volunteers will participate in a three-day training hosted at a luxury ecotourism ranch high in the oak woodlands of the Sierra La Esmeralda. This ranch, located near Nogales, Sonora, has a long history of partnering with Sky Island Alliance. The training will cover bird ecology, conservation issues, and specific bird inventory protocols—learning these skills will open doors for participating in other bird inventory work.

Part II: in June 2013
Volunteers will travel to the Sierra San Luis to spend a week inventorying high elevation habitats including mountain grasslands, oak woodlands, and pine-oak forests. All sites are located 35 miles southeast of Douglas/Agu Prieta on the Rancho Pan Duro. Data collected on this expedition will fill information gaps for high priority stewardship species and better identify bird conservation priorities in the face of climate change.

Who: Experienced and intermediate birders interested in exploring bird habitats on Sky Island Alliance's partner ranches in Northern Mexico.

Why: Collect critical data on stewardship species in understudied areas in Northern Mexico.

When: Two separate events include a three-day bird monitoring training held on September 14th - 16th of 2012 and a week-long birding expedition in June 2013.

Where: The volunteer training will be held at an ecotourism ranch in the Sierra La Esmeralda near Nogales, Sonora. The week-long birding expedition will cover high-elevation habitats in the Sierra San Luis, 35 miles southeast of Agua Prieta, on the Rancho Pan Duro.

Cost: $150 will cover lodging and two dinners at Rancho La Esmeralda, you will need to bring breakfasts and lunches. The bird training itself is free. Food will be provided during the week-long birding expedition in 2013 at Rancho Pan Duro; this will be a camping trip.

Contact Nick Deyo at the Sky Island Alliance for further information and to RSVP. Email: nick@skyislandalliance.org. Phone: (520) 624-7080 x20.

www.desertriversaudubon.org
Tiny, active little birds, the **Wood Warblers** are among the more colorful New World families. Although they bear the same name, they are not related to birds called Warblers in Australia and the Old World. There are about 115 species, and almost half of these can be found in North America. Unfortunately for us West Coasters, the majority of those are found in the Eastern US and Canada, but we do have a good share of Western specialties. Our Lucy’s Warbler is the finest member of the family in North America. The Sky Islands canyons host specially species such as the Painted Redstart, not found elsewhere in the region.

The warblers found in North America are nearly all migratory. Many take routes that traverse the Gulf of Mexico or the Great Lakes. Stopping points on the Texas Coast and along the Great Lakes, where birds gather to refuel on either side of the crossing, can host large numbers of species.

Wood Warblers are mainly insectivorous, although a few species do eat berries or nectar as well, particularly in the winter. Many species forage high in the treetops. Spend any amount of time searching for Warblers, and you will soon understand the term “warbler neck.” However, not all Warblers stay in the treetops—some species reside in Overbirds and the water-thrushes forage mainly on the ground around leaf litter. Since most warblers are after the same food, they have an interesting strategy for co-existing in the same habitat. Different species pick niches at different heights and distances from the trunk and so divide up the food supply. This can be one clue, used together with other field marks, as to a Warbler’s identity.

In breeding season, male Warblers sing on territory. Often there are two versions of the song. One is used to defend the territory from other males; the other, to attract a mate. Females, in general, don’t sing, although there are some notable exceptions such as the Yellow Warbler. Nest building and incubation in most species is performed by the female. Both parents feed the young, and may continue to do so for several weeks after fledging.

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**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Desert Rivers Audubon recently received significant contributions from these companies and individuals in support of our work and mission:

- **LPL Financial**
- **Coyotes**
- **Intel**
- **Arizona Medical Network**

Desert Rivers also thanks Mr. B.J. Shortridge for a significant donation.

Our appreciation goes to the following corporate donors who have given to support a program or overall operating costs of the Desert Rivers Audubon Society from May through July, 2012:

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

**Tucson Audubon Specialty Workshops**

In addition to the beginning and intermediate birding classes given by Desert Rivers Audubon, (see DRAS Calendar on our website) Tucson Audubon offers specialty workshops to hone your birding skills.

As part of the Lifelong Birding Series they are pleased to offer Specialty Workshops. Intended as stand-alone classes, these workshops are a great opportunity to focus on specific groups of birds and brush up on your identification skills. Instructors go into detail on similar species, identification techniques, and vocalizations. These workshops are for advanced beginner to intermediate birders.

All specialty workshops take place over the course of two days. In the workshop summaries below, the first date listed is the day of the classroom session and the second date listed is the field trip outing. The cost for all specialty workshops is $110 for members and $145 for non-members, which includes a year membership in Tucson Audubon. All classroom sessions take place on Thursdays (unless otherwise noted) from 5:30pm – 8:30pm in the conference room of the Historic Y building on University and 5th. All field trips are on Saturdays from 7:00am – 5:00pm. Transportation to the field trip sites is the responsibility of the participant; carpooling is highly recommended. Workshops are limited to 10 participants.

Register online for any of these workshops by clicking the link below. Please contact Betty Pfeifer by email or phone at 520-209-1812 if you have any questions.

**Flycatchers: Specialty Workshop** September 13 & 15, 2012 Ready to leap into the identification of Empidonax and Myiarchus flycatchers? This workshop introduces you to the diverse family Tyrannidae and highlights the ways to separate the kingbirds, pewees, empids, and flycatchers of southeastern Arizona. Taught by Homer Hansen.
It’s about that time again.....

After spending a relatively warm winter in Arizona, the snowbirds are returning to the cooler climates of their summer homes, and so are many of the actual birds we see in our area. They are headed north (sometimes really far north) to their summer homes to cool off and, most importantly, to breed. Most of the ducks we see are on this list, including the Lesser Scaup and the Northern Shoveler.

As these winter visitors leave us, other birds return to Arizona from their tropical vacations. Since many of us don’t do much local birding in the summer, we may not be as aware of these “sunbirds”. They aren’t as numerous as our winter visitors, but they still bring variety to the desert during the hot summer months. Among the birds that make the Phoenix area home for those hottest months of the year is the Summer Tanager.

In between those two groups are the birds that visit us only briefly during the spring and fall as they migrate from their winter homes to their northerly homes for the summer. Some of these birds pass through quickly, perhaps not stopping at all. Others may stop off for several days or weeks to rest and eat up to prepare for the remainder of their journeys. Birds in this category include the Dunlin (recently seen at Gilbert Riparian Preserve) and the Nashville and MacGillivray’s Warblers.

And, of course, we have year-round residents and breeders, such as the Northern Mockingbird, Say’s Phoebe, and Mourning Dove that stick around all four seasons.

To learn more about who is here when and where they go, take a look at the range maps in your field guide and learn what the different colors (and sometimes lines) mean on these maps. This will help you learn when a bird you are interested in seeing might be here, or when to plan that trip so you can catch that special bird you want to see. If you want to look at when birds are seen at a particular location or area, go to http://www.ebird.org, click on the Explore Data tab, select Bar Charts, and select the location or area (you don’t need an account for this). You will get back a chart like this one:

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<th>Species Name</th>
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The chart shows how often a bird has been seen each month. The bigger the green bar, the more times the bird was reported. The birds are listed in the same order as in your field guide (old guides have a slightly different order), so you can find a particular bird and see when it’s normally seen. And you can see pretty easily which birds migrate (like the Snow or Ross’s Goose), and which ones don’t (like the Canada Goose).

Our quiz this month, then, is about migratory and resident birds. The puzzle looks only at our summer and winter visitors, as well as those birds that are here all year. No birds that migrate through the area in spring and fall are included.

For the following birds, identify the species and mark whether it is a summer visitor, winter visitor, or resident year-round.

Photo Credits: All photos courtesy of Cindy Marple

1. Black-throated Hummingbird/Summer Red-tailed Hawk
2. Great Blue Heron
3. 2.
4. 3.
5. 4.
6. 5.
7. 6.
8. 7.
9. 8.
10. 9.
MONTHLY MEETINGS
Meetings are held at the Gilbert Community Center in Gilbert, at 130 N. Oak Street, on second Tuesdays at 7 to 8:30 pm, September through May. Doors open at 6:30 pm, and everyone is welcome. The center is two 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, at 2757 E. Guadalupe Road, Gilbert at 8:00 am. The Chandler Family Birdwalks are held every first Saturday, November through April, at Veterans Oasis Park, 4050 E. Chandler Heights Road, Chandler at 8:00 am. Binoculars provided, walks are free. See 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=birdw05&l=a1

Read 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 signing up on our Members Page online, 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 audubon@emailcustomerservice.com and asking them to “hard-code” your membership to Chapter B08.

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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