



Calendar

All monthly meetings begin at 6:30 pm at the Pinetop-Lakeside Town Council Chambers. Fieldtrip times and meeting places vary; see below or please check the website. You may call 367-2462 for more information.

Meetings and Programs:

Mar. 5: Steve Campbell will speak on local forest ecology

Apr. 2: Jennifer Johnson (USFWS) - how to get youngsters interested in wildlife

May 7: Lloyd Pentecost – how to photograph nature and just about everything else with a point and shoot hybrid camera

June 4: Sharon Lowery (AZGF) – habitat restoration of wildlife areas

July 9: Sarah Porter (Audubon Arizona) – Audubon Western Rivers Action Network Bird Friendly Communities Initiative

Aug. 2: Gabrielle Zornes (Show Low Public Library Children's Librarian) – birds and wildlife on the Big Island of Hawaii

Sept. 3: Paul Green (Tucson Audubon President) – topic to be announced

Oct. 1: Speaker and topic to be announced

Nov. 5: Dr. Ole Alcumbrac (White Mtn. Animal Hospital) – topic to be announced

Dec. 3: Christmas Party Potluck

Field Trips for March and April are pending.

Your Officers

President: Mary Ellen Bittorf 367-2462

Vice-Pres.: Tom Jernigan 532-1510

Secretary: Liz Jernigan 532-1510

Treasurer: Chuck Bittorf 367-2462

Programs: Loretta Pena 368-3380

Field Trips: Kent Schipper 537-7569

Editor: Jody Inman 369-3240

Membership: Position open

Website Manager: Richard Inman 369-3240

Board Members: Kent Schipper, Jody Inman and Richard Inman

Reach us at: www.whitemountainaudubon.org

March-April 2014

Out on a Limb With Your President

As I write this letter the weather forecast calls for some rain in the future. I hope it is right. This spring-like weather has been great, but we need some moisture.

Over the last few days there have been some unusual birds in my yard. These are: 1 female Evening Grosbeak for three days, 2 Brown Creepers, some Cassin's Finches, three Stellar's Jays (they should be here all year round, but for several weeks we had none). We have had three White-breasted Nuthatches, and one appears to be young. For a while there were four Flickers, and two seemed young. We have also had the usual Hairy and Acorn Woodpeckers, Pygmy Nuthatches, Juncos, and House Finches. Oregon Juncos have been missing.

The Audubon board is working on the film festival. We have some good films and we are looking for more. We need sponsors for the film festival. Do any of you know of a business owner or individual that you would be willing to contact for a \$100.00 sponsorship? If so, please contact me or any board member.

The starting time for our meetings has been changed to 6:30 p.m. The speaker for the March 5th meeting will be Steve Campbell. I hope all of you will join us for our first meeting in 2014.

Until then.....enjoy birding.

Mary Ellen ~

Timber Mesa Christmas Bird Count Results 2013

Pied-billed Grebe	10	Mountain Bluebird	7
Western Grebe	21	Townsend's Solitaire	3
Great blue Heron	3	Swainson's Thrush	3
Canada Goose	302	American Robin	65
Mallard	1092	European Starling	250
Gadwall	210	Chipping Sparrow	4
American Wigeon	279	Dark-eyed Junco	64
Northern Pintail	4	Oregon	7
Northern Shoveler	40	Pink-sided	7
Cinnamon Teal	14	Western Meadowlark	2
Canvasback	34	Red-winged Blackbird	395
Redhead	21	Great-tailed Grackle	42
Ring-necked Duck	268	Brewer's Blackbird	14
Lesser Scaup	2	House Finch	54
Common Goldeneye	4		
Bufflehead	112	Start Time: 8:30	
Common Merganser	118	Start Temperature" 20 Degrees	
Hooded Merganser	24	Weather: Snow, Overcast, no wind	
Ruddy Duck	67	End Temperature" 51 Degrees	
Osprey	1	Total Miles Driven: 112	
Northern Harrier	13	Total miles walked: 4.5	
Bald Eagle	13	Total Hours Birding: 22.5	
(5 Immature)			
Sharp-shinned Hawk	2		
Red-tailed Hawk	3		
American Kestrel	7		
American Coot	1231		
Wilson's Snipe	2		
Eurasian collared Dove	2		
Belted Kingfisher	2		
Acorn Woodpecker	1		
Lewis's Woodpecker	25		
Northern Flicker	10		
Hairy Woodpecker	5		
Say's Phoebe	3		
Steller's Jay	15		
Western Scrub Jay	3		
Pinyon Jay	50		
American Crow	20		
Common Raven	296		
Mountain Chickadee	10		
Brown Creeper	4		
White-breasted Nuthatch	20		
Pygmy Nuthatch	54		
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	12		
Western Bluebird	19		

Thank you to participants Mary Ellen and Chuck Bittorf, Sue Sitko, Ann Hilliard, Jed Fulkerson, Richard and Jody Inman, Liz and Tom Jernigan, and Loretta and Bob Pena for helping with this year's count.

Bosque del Apache Field Trip Report

White Mountain Audubon members Richard and Jody Inman planned a last minute trip to Bosque del Apache (in San Antonio, New Mexico) on January 25, and persuaded their friend Elaine Finner to join them. Staying in a hotel in Socorro, they were able to take part in two guided bus tours on the Refuge. These tours take place every Friday and Saturday in January and February. The first tour focused on duck identification while the second provided background on the history and function of the Refuge, also taking us on the Intermittent Loop that is only open to visitors for 3 weekends a year so waterfowl can get away from all the people. We lucked out to visit the Refuge on one of those weekends. The Inmans and their guest, Elaine, also took a Refuge birding tour in their own vehicle.

Cathie, the guide on the duck identification tour, had a wealth of knowledge. Through her, we learned some valuable tips on seeing the finer details that differentiate ducks. She told us that ducks have a flat bill, while geese and all other birds have a vertical beak. And duck daddies (drakes) abandon their families when the egg is laid, while geese stay together until the young are raised. We found out that the Bosque provides refuge to 13 species of ducks. We now know that dabblers have feet in the middle of their bodies, whereas divers' feet are in the back of their bodies, preventing them from being able to walk on land. Did you know a duck can live up to 8 years, but that they usually only survive about 4 or 5 years in the wild? And that mallards are the only ducks with that unique curl on their tail? Also, mallards and shovelers are the only ducks with bright orange feet. Cathie helped us out with identifying the ducks we saw on the tour; pintails stand out because of their long neck and pin-like tail, but the female doesn't have the same tail. Gadwalls have a black hind end while a green-winged teal has a butter-colored rear (hunters call them "butter butts"). Shovelers have an obvious shovel-like bill that does not close, allowing them to strain food through their bills. American Wigeons have a white "race" stripe across their heads. Ruddy ducks have a stiff tail and the drake has a blue bill and reddish body during the breeding season that really sets him apart. So these were some easy marks Cathie helped us learn to tell our ducks apart in the field.

The 2nd Refuge bus tour focused on the history and management of the Refuge, again with Cathie as our guide. The Refuge started out in 1845 as a Mexican Land Grant. In 1936, the United States acquired the land as a waterfowl refuge. Prior to that, farming was tried but failed because the land was just salty desert (part of the Chihuahuan Desert). The Duck Stamp Act passed in 1934 as a way to fund waterfowl habitat. Then in 1939, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt officially signed legislation protecting the Bosque as a refuge. The original buildings were built by CCC camp workers during the Depression.

Today, cooperative farmers grow GMO and pesticide-free corn and alfalfa here using water from the Rio Grande, now flowing 10 miles away. The corn is used to feed the large winter populations of Sandhill Cranes, Canada Geese, and Ross and Snow Geese that fill the air and the fields with their noisy presence. Counts have shown that as many as 20,000 cranes use the fields between Bosque Del Apache and Albuquerque 90 miles to the north. The weekly crane count determines how much corn is harvested...a crane eats $\frac{3}{4}$ pound of corn a day. The water use in the ponds and for watering the fields is heavily managed, with 130 gages requiring daily checks to allow 4-6 inches of water for dabbling ducks to feed, as well as deeper ponds for diving ducks. 70% of the water used here goes back to the river, washing away salt, bird

excrement and avian cholera. Snow geese always carry avian cholera but only get sick when stressed. Cranes and ducks get avian cholera too. Refuge counts show that about 30-90 Snow and Ross Geese die from this disease daily. Refuge personnel leave dead geese in the fields for scavenging Bald Eagles, only picking up dead geese in the water.

March will see the Sandhill Cranes leaving for their breeding grounds, with monogamous family groups migrating together to return to their own hatching sites. Greater Sandhills (shorter wings, paler primaries, taller birds) usually head to Wyoming, Colorado, and Idaho to make their nests, while Lesser Sandhills (shorter bills and legs) prefer Alaska, Canada, and Nebraska (far north) to breed. In fact, many of the ducks we saw will leave the refuge come spring. But this is a list of birds we were able to see at his time of year: Northern Shrike, Black Phoebe, Say's Phoebe, Eurasian Dove, Ross Goose, Snow Goose, Greater Sandhill Crane, Lesser Sandhill Crane, Blue Goose, Northern Shovelers, Mallards, Northern Pintail, Green-Winged Teal, Cinnamon Teal, Ruddy Duck, Gadwall, American Wigeon, Bald Eagle, Raven, American Crow, Northern Harrier, Red-Tail Hawk, American Kestrel, White-Crowned Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Spotted Towhee, Gambel's Quail, Great Blue Heron, Greater Roadrunner, Canada Goose, American Coot, Killdeer, Song Sparrow, and Ring-Billed Gull. Not bad for one day of birding at the Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge. The Inmans hope to lead a tour of the Refuge in 2015 (probably January 23rd or 24th), so mark your calendars.

~Jody Inman



Snow Geese on the wing, Greater Sandhill Cranes feeding in corn stubble, r.inman

CONSERVATION

The Price of a Loud World: How Road Noise Harms Birds

By Emily Guerin, High Country News, Dec. 31, 2013

Last fall, a team of researchers from Idaho's Boise State University hiked into the mountains outside of town with backpacks full of batteries and speakers. The unusual cargo was not for a backcountry dance party, but rather for a unique experiment to determine the impact of road noise on migratory birds.

The scientists hung speakers from trees and blasted sounds of cars passing, creating a “phantom road.” They blared the road noise for four days, turned it off for four days, then repeated the cycle. The experiment took place as yellow warblers, ruby-crowned kinglets, American robins and other birds passed through on their journey south, its [conclusions were striking](#): On the days when the road was “on,” bird abundance declined by more 25 percent, and two species, cedar waxwings and yellow warblers, avoided the area almost entirely.

In other words, the researchers found that anthropogenic noise alone can reduce the amount of stopover habitat available to migratory birds. And because 83 percent of the land area in the U.S. is within one kilometer of a road, they wrote, “it is likely that noise-sensitive species such as the yellow warbler avoid substantial areas of otherwise suitable habitat simply because they are too loud.”

How bad can noise *really* be? It's a question that researchers in the [burgeoning field of soundscape ecology](#) are constantly asking. And their growing body of research is starting to show that the noises humans and our machines make [can have significant and widespread effects on animals](#). For example:

- [Bernie Krause](#), who began recording wild soundscapes 45 years ago, documented the effect of low-flying Navy jets on the chorusing of spadefoot toads in California's Mono Lake. The toads, which normally sing in a synchronized rhythm that [makes it hard for predators to pick off individuals](#), took 45 minutes to reestablish their singing pattern after a jet passed overhead.
- In 2012, [researchers at University of Copenhagen and Aberystwyth University](#) found that some songbirds in urban areas not only sing at a higher pitch to overcome the low-frequency din of city noise, but adjust their songs to account for urban architecture as well. Larger birds like mourning doves, which sing at low pitches, are more affected by manmade noise than smaller, higher-pitched birds like house finches, [found researcher Clint Francis](#).
- Underwater sonar from British naval ships [has been linked](#) to the widespread stranding of dolphins.

Anthropogenic noise can even impact plants: In [a 2012 study](#), Francis found fewer piñon pine seedlings around noisy natural gas compressors in New Mexico. Why? Scrub jays, voracious consumers and distributors of piñon seeds, [are put off by the noise](#) and avoid the area.

“The world’s getting louder and there’s a lot of evidence already that it’s having an impact on wildlife,” says Jesse Barber, a biology professor at Boise State who co-authored the phantom road paper. “We need to understand noise so we can mitigate it.”

Barber’s study, which came out in October, is already having an impact in the National Park Service, which funded the study. The NPS’s [Natural Sounds and Night Skies division](#) is now looking for a park road to re-surface with “quiet pavement,” which can reduce road noise by a factor of ten. “We know noise is a stressor with significant effects,” says Kurt Fristrup, a senior scientist in the division. But making an area quieter is a lot harder than making it louder.

Still, there are solutions at hand: In addition to quiet pavement, government agencies can erect sound walls around gas compressors and highways, lower speed limits, or build fewer roads. Making the world quieter has another benefit, too: By reducing noise stress on birds and other animals, we can help them be in better shape to confront more vexing problems like climate change.

“Problems like climate change are truly in the hands of the politicians,” says Barber. “Road noise is a much more tractable problem. We have engineering solutions to make the world quieter and they can be immediately implemented.”

Emily Guerin is a correspondent for High Country News. She tweets @guerinemily.



~Jay by Kirsten Munson

“In safety and in Bliss, may all creatures be of a blissful heart. Whatever breathing beings there may be, frail or firm...long or big...short or small...seen or unseen...dwelling far or near...existing or yet seeking to exist, may all creatures be of a blissful heart.”

~Sutta Nipata 143-52

BIRD NOTES

Residents of the White Mountains are fortunate to see an abundance of bluebirds seeming to thrive along our meadows and roads. But do you know how to tell the difference between the Mountain Bluebirds and Western Bluebirds that share our forests and meadows? Don't think it's the rufous wash on the throat and breast on the Western Bluebird that sets them apart...many Mountain Bluebirds (even adult males) will have a trace of this coloration. The biggest differences to note on the Mountain Bluebird are the longer wings and tail, thinner bill with little or no yellow at the base, and that it often hovers and pounces or hovers and gleans when foraging. The female Mountain Bluebird can be defined by the pale line across her forehead, pale chin, and whitish edging on her culverts. The Western Bluebird, by contrast, is stocky, with rather short tail and wings, stout bill, large head, and it does not hover when foraging. The male Western adult may have an entirely chestnut back, but some are nearly all-blue. Of major concern to the survival of these local jewels is the protection of snags...removal of dead trees and branches reduces their chances of finding nest holes and increases competition with other cavity-nesting species (esp. House Sparrows and European Starlings). Setting out bluebird-specific nest boxes increases their hopes for survival. In fact, some bluebirds reared in a nest box imprint to it and will select that type of box for breeding.

(from "The Sibley Guide to Birds" by David Allen Sibley, pp. 400-401, and "The Birder's Handbook" by Paul R. Ehrlich, David S. Dobkin, and Darryl Wheye, p. 454)

White Mountain Audubon Society Membership/Donation Form

White Mountain Audubon Society membership dues are: **Individual \$15**, or **Family \$25 per year**. Please renew your membership. Your tax-deductible membership supports our on-going programs and activities, as well as future new projects. Your membership and donations do make a difference!!!

MEMBERSHIP _____ DONATION _____

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Send this form and your dues or donation to: **White Mountain Audubon Society**
P.O. Box 3043
Pinetop, AZ 85935

You may use this form for either your Membership renewal or a Donation to WMAS. Please designate above which you are doing. Thank you very much for your support of White Mountain Audubon Society!

Where to write

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www.flake.senat.gov/contact

Gov. Jan Brewer
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Rep. Albert Hale
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Rep. Peshlakai
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White Mountain Audubon Society is dedicated to the enjoyment of birds and other wildlife by providing environmental leadership and awareness through fellowship, education, community involvement, and conservation programs in the White Mountains and surrounding areas.

**White Mountain Audubon Society
P. O. Box 3043
Pinetop, AZ 85935**

If you find distressed songbirds, raptors including eagles, waterfowl and small mammals, please contact Susan Taggart at (928) 242-5796. If you are unable to reach her and need assistance immediately, you may call the White Mountain Animal Hospital in Lakeside at (928) 368-8425 or Alta Sierra Veterinary Clinic in Show Low (928) 537-2880. Susan works in conjunction with the animal hospitals and is sub-permitted through the Arizona Game and Fish Department to care for injured and orphaned wildlife as a community service.

www.whitemountainaudubon.org