



MAY - JUNE EDITION 2019

Out on a Limb with your President:

White clouds drift across a beautiful blue sky...the clouds turn dark, loud thunder and lightening announce the beginning of monsoons...rain falls on a thirsty land...there's a change in the air, bright yellow contrasts with the green of the Ponderosa Pines and wild flowers are everywhere. Squirrels, butterflies, bees, and hummingbirds are busy and yes the hummingbirds have arrived. Generally the first two hummingbirds to appear are the black-chinned and the broadtail followed by the little caliope and the beautiful magnificent. I call these beautiful little birds little aerodynamic flying machines. Around the 4th of July rufous appears and the action really picks up around the hummingbird feeders. All hummingbirds think all feeders belong just to each individual, but their fun to watch and if you wish, they will entertain you all summer long. Speaking of hummingbird feeders, the food ratio is 1 part sugar to 4 parts of water. Red food coloring is not needed.

Last summer Carla and I were able to watch a beautiful all white hummingbird at the feeder of a resident in Show Low. After some research I learned that there are two kinds of all white hummingbirds. A true albino has red eyes and everything is either white or has no color, meaning the beak, feet and legs. The other all white hummingbird has the eye color, beak, feet and leg color of it's species. I think the white hummingbird we saw last summer was a luicistic black-chinned hummingbird.

Don't forget the upcoming Nature Film Festival on July 13th. You can help by providing cookies or there are volunteers needed for several positions during the festival. Also, if you can find a sponsor or help with taking fliers around that would be appreciated.

Enjoy your summer...and enjoy birding.

Mary Ellen

White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) Chapter Officers:

President: Mary Ellen Bittorf	367-2462
Vice-President: Tom Jernigan	532-1510
Secretary: Liz Jernigan	532-1511
Treasurer: Chuck Bittorf	367-2462
Field Trips: Rob Bettaso	368-8481
Newsletter: Rob Bettaso	368-8481
Webmaster: Allen Vicker	
Membership: Position Open	

Board Members:

Mary Ellen Bittorf, Chuck Bittorf, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Joan Patrick, Jody Inman, Mary Freemon, Kathy Dahnk, Rob Bettaso.

CALENDAR

All monthly programs/meetings begin at 6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January and February). Please note that all upcoming meetings are at the Pinetop-Lakeside Town Council Chambers, 325 W. White Mountain Blvd until future notice.

You may call Mary Ellen Bittorf (928-367-2462) for more information on monthly meetings and special events. For information on field trips please direct your calls to Rob Bettaso (928-368-8481).

2019 Upcoming Monthly Programs:

June 5th – Lorna Cox will present a program called “Whiskers in the Woods” about the secretive and surprising gray fox. She says: “I’ve had an up close and personal relationship for years with a gray fox family up here.”

July 3rd – Dwayne Bartimus, reptile specialist, will present a program on the animals he rehabilitates.

2019 Upcoming Special Events:

June 29th – Feathers and Nests by Mary Ellen Bittorf. 10AM at the White Mountain Nature Center at 425 S. Woodland Rd in Pinetop-Lakeside. Get your flock to the Nature Center to look at how birds fly and engineer their nests. Join in on an easy walk to check out our new Nest Box Trail.

July 13th – Eighth Annual White Mountain Audubon and Nature Center Film Festival and dinner. This event takes place at the White Mountain Nature Center on 425 Woodland Rd., Lakeside. Tickets available at the Nature Center or from Board Members. See the WMAS/WMNC websites for up-to-date information.

2019 Field Trip Schedule:

Monthly Bird Walks - geared for bird lovers of all skill levels and all ages. Hiking conditions variable but suitable for participants in reasonably good health interested in walks ranging from 1-3 miles. All welcome; no pets please. Bring binoculars, field guide, and appropriate apparel, gear, snacks and water for outdoor walking in the White Mountains area during the April through October time frame. For further information call Rob at 368-8481.

May 18th - Pintail Lake: participants will meet at 7am at the Pintail Lake parking area which is signed on Highway 77 a few miles North of Highway 60 (between Show Low and Taylor; east side of 77). Marsh birds and open water birds should be easily observed; especially for those with spotting scopes. Vantage points from boardwalk viewing areas.

June 1st (Details TBA) - White Mountain Nature Center: participants will meet at 7am at the White Mountain Nature Center (425 S. Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside). Bird varieties abound in the diverse habitats of the Nature Center and adjacent Woodland Lake Park grounds (natural terrain trails). This birding walk will be a part of the “Walk for the Woods” events and pre-registration is expected (inquire of Nature Center staff for details).

In Remembrance

The lead goose leads
Migration bound

The V formation cuts
Space and time

The flock lifts
Following
The leader pacing
All others

They descend
The field awaits
Tall grass seeds
Their summer home

One last journey
The leader lies down
Others will remember
His guide

When the flock departs
In the brisk fall
Memory remains
Continuing the journey, one and all.

For Bob Pena; from Jimmy Videle

New Birders at Petrified Forest – article and photos by Sue Sitko

What a difference a few months make! In December, Rob Bettaso, Pat Lopez, and I conducted “point count” surveys of wintering birds at Petrified Forest National Park (reported in January’s WMAS newsletter), and while it was a rewarding experience, let’s just say bird species “richness” was somewhat underwhelming. Although we did get intimately familiar with Horned Larks! Pat Lopez is a professor of biology at Northland Pioneer Community College, and takes her students on an annual field trip. This year’s selected site was Petrified Forest National Park. She again connected with Rob and me to provide bird identification assistance for a morning’s outing along the Park’s Puerco River riparian corridor, anticipating this would hold the greatest variety of birds, especially migrating songbirds. We gladly agreed to help, both for the enjoyment of birding and for the opportunity to interact with the next generation of potential biologists (and maybe encourage a few to become avid birders!).

Rob and I arrived at the park early Friday afternoon, when Pat’s class was immersed in other field experiences including a herpetology walk (finding lizards and other reptiles) and conversations with the Park paleontologist and other staff. We decided to scout the Puerco River site to see what we could see. We were pleasantly surprised that the quiet, warm afternoon produced trees active with Ruby-crowned Kinglets and warblers such as Orange-crowned, Yellow-rumped, Yellow, and Black-throated Gray. A Hermit Thrush quietly hopped on a downed cottonwood log. Blue-gray Gnatcatchers buzzed in the tangle of shrubs. We felt this was, indeed, a good place to bring the students the following morning.

Back at “camp” (a sandy parking area and ramada behind the Park’s suite of office buildings, which worked well and offered indoor bathrooms), more urban-comfortable birds serenaded us, from Say’s Phoebe, Brewer’s Blackbird, and Western Kingbird to non-native Eurasian Collared Dove, House Sparrow, and House Finch. Rob scouted the nearby Park sewage ponds and reported sightings of Wilson’s Phalarope, American Avocet, and Killdeer, and we agreed to add a stop there after tomorrow morning’s outing.

Pretty impressive that over a dozen students and the handful of teachers and field leaders were up and ready to go by 6:45 Saturday morning. We drove to the Puerco Pueblo parking area and ambled down towards the Puerco River. Now, as field trip leaders many times over, both Rob and I always cross our fingers and hope for a good bird show when there are people anticipating that very thing. Nothing is so disheartening than bringing people out to see beautiful birds and none appear.

We were not disappointed. Almost immediately, a large cottonwood held a flock of warblers, many we saw the day before, but we added Wilson's and Virginia's to the list. A Western Kingbird sat prominently on a branch, showing us its tell-tale white edge on its tail feathers. And perhaps most enjoyable of all, a Bullock's Oriole gave everyone good looks at its day-glo orange plumage. What could entice new birders more than that??

Continuing along the road, students took it upon themselves to spread out and do their own birdwatching. Some challenging birds showed up (it's hard to have 12 new birders find a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher hippity-hopping deep in thick shrubs), and others made it easy (more than one Mockingbird sang multiple songs from different perches), a Rock Wren popped up on a large boulder to bask in the sun. We enjoyed finding petroglyphs on the nearby rocky cliffs and animal tracks in the sandy roadway.

Rob, Pat, and I answered several questions about birds, birdwatching, and bird identification. I have to say the question I most enjoyed answering was "what's a lifer?" when I happily announced that at the end of our birding time when the students had mostly gathered to complete their field diary, Rob and I had tracked down a Gray Vireo, the first one I had seen in my lifetime (Rob is not the compulsive lister I am, but we believe it may have been a first for him too). This question probably would not have been asked had it not been for that little bird's appearance.

We went back to camp, and a few of us took a spotting scope to the sewage ponds, re-locating the phalaropes, killdeers, and avocets, a Spotted Sandpiper, and a few more species. All in all, we amassed 37 species in less than 24 hours birdwatching Petrified Forest National Park. The Park may appear to be a desolate, dry place to many, but we now know there is a new cadre of young biology students (and ancient peoples) that know otherwise!



Some Other Recent Bird Sightings From Around Our Region:

Wild Turkey, Willet, White-faced Ibis, Northern Goshawk, Sora, Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Black-chinned Hummingbird, Red-naped Woodpecker, Plumbeous Vireo, Clark's Nutcracker, Purple Martin, Red-faced Warbler, Painted Redstart, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Lesser Goldfinch.

Technology Tips for Beginning Birders (Part 3, The e-Field Guide). By Rob Bettaso and Dan Groebner

I'm old fashioned. As such, I have never had a smartphone and, for the most part, don't care to have one. But if I ever do get such a gadget, it will be because I've heard good things about some of the electronic bird field guides and related materials.

Among the "pros & cons" of e-guides are the following. Pros – because they are loaded into your smartphone, birding e-guides (apps) are extremely portable; they can contain information about bird identification in multimedia presentations (text, photos, drawings, video, audio, maps, etc); you can maintain "life lists" and move them to wherever you want (home pc, email to friends, cloud-based archives); you can more easily compare and contrast similar species by sight and sound; you can filter to include only birds in the area in which you are birding. Cons – if your phone charge dies then you will want to have a hard-copy guide as back-up; if your phone is lost or broken while you are out birding you will also need a hard-copy guide as back-up; it can be easy to be overwhelmed by the abundance of information on a birding app, causing you to lose valuable time when trying to identify a bird; any aspect of the app that relies upon cell tower or satellite communications (e.g. GPS) can be cut in remote or out of service locations; smartphones cost more than hardcopy guides (they may even cost more than a good pair of binoculars).

According to Dan Groebner -- a friend, colleague, and my sometimes antithesis (i.e. he IS a techno-geek): "Early morning is a great time to use a bird identification app like iBird Pro Guide to Birds (\$14.99) or The Sibley eGuide to the Birds of North America (\$19.99). There are other less expensive bird apps out there, but they don't cover very many birds or they don't play the bird's calls, which can actually be used to identify more birds than by visual recognition. Another app and web site used by more people every year interested in birds is the free eBird, where you can take photos of birds or describe them to get help with identification from world-wide bird experts. Other birders report their sightings so you can learn where to find certain species.

The eBird app is a great way to learn more birds and expand your life list of species observed, but if you are interested in all wildlife and the natural history of an area, try using the free iNaturalist. With this app you can get help identifying animals as well as viewing pins on a map near you with observations of interesting species. It is also possible to join specialized nearby "Projects" where you can contribute your observations of targeted species and become part of a larger group working together. If you have a special interest in flowers, insects, fish and even rocks, a search of the app stores will probably turn up many choices. Read the reviews before purchasing, especially the parts about the in-app purchases which might be required to reap all of the benefits advertised."

Editor's Note:

Our Treasurer (Chuck Bittorf) asked me to write up a short summary pertaining to the National Audubon Society - NAS (from which all of the various Chapters are derived). I checked the NAS website (www.audubon.org) and was reminded that the NAS was founded in 1905 by John Muir, G.B. Grinnell & T. Gilbert Pearson. It is a non-profit environmental organization dedicated to conservation, science, education, & grassroots advocacy to advance the Audubon Mission.

With a donation of \$20 you will receive a year's subscription to the beautiful and informative Audubon magazine. A suggested donation of \$50 will entitle you to many other member benefits throughout the year. Visit the NAS website or call them if you have questions (844-428-3826).

You might also be interested to know that in addition to our chapter (WMAS), Arizona also has chapters in Chandler (Desert Rivers Audubon Society); Phoenix (Maricopa A.S.); Sedona (Northern Arizona A.S.); Prescott (Prescott A.S.); Glendale (Sonoran A.S.); Tucson (Tucson A.S.); and Yuma (Yuma A.S.). Our State office ("Audubon Arizona") is located in Phoenix.

A Birder's Riddle -- By Rob Bettaso

(The answer to last issue's riddle was the Great-horned Owl)

The riddle below is told by the male of the species:

It's my time to arrive,
Now, in the month of May.
I've come up from the south,
From down old Mehico way.

High in the trees,
At the top of a pine.
I'm yellow, black, and red,
With my feathers so fine.

My rather stout bill,
Is big for a songbird.
It is also notched,
Just ask any birdnerd.

My mate, she's greenish above,
And canary yellow below.
Twere it not for her larger size,
You might think her a vireo.

Two bars we have,
Upon each wing.
You can see them best,
When we perch to sing.

Somewhat like a robin's,
Are the phrases of my song.
A bit more hoarse and burry,
And not nearly as long.

From the tropics to the mountains,
Fruits and bugs are my food.
Spend your time outdoors,
And I will improve your mood.

Membership/Donation Form

White Mountain Audubon Society chapter membership dues are: Individual \$15 or Family \$25 per year. Please renew your membership every January. 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 _____

Individual _____ Family _____

Name _____ Date _____

Mailing Address _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

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! LIKE US ON FACEBOOK.

White Mountain Audubon Society

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