



## JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2011

### CALENDAR

All monthly meetings begin at 7:00 pm at Pinetop-Lakeside Town Council Chambers in Lakeside. All monthly fieldtrips meet at 7:00 am at Pinetop McDonald's, unless stated otherwise. There are no monthly meetings in January and February.

**March 2-** Regular monthly meeting; speaker unknown at this time.

### Your Officers

<b>President:</b> Mary Ellen Bittorf	367-2462
<b>Vice-President:</b> Tom Jernigan	532-1510
<b>Secretary:</b> Liz Jernigan	532-1510
<b>Treasurer:</b> Chuck Bittorf	367-2462
<b>Programs:</b> Loretta Pena	368-3380
<b>Editor:</b> Loretta Pena	368-3380
<b>Membership:</b> Mary Gordon	537-0447
<b>Board Members:</b> Mary Gordon, Steve Gordon, Kent Schipper, Lloyd Pentecost and Doris Raspa	

**Reach us at:** [www.whitemountainaudubon.org](http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org)

### Out on a Limb with Your President...

I hope all of you are well and that you enjoyed the holiday season.

On Wednesday, January 5, I was privileged, along with about thirty others, to watch Susan Taggart release a Long-eared Owl back into the wild. She had been rehabilitating the owl since December 31, when it was spotted along Bourden Ranch road by two good Samaritans, Bob and Barbara Herrmann. I was curious about the Long-eared Owl because it is seldom seen, probably because it is nocturnal. When it hunts, it typically flies low to the ground looking for mice or other small creatures. Compared to the Great Horned Owl, it is medium-sized. It typically is 15 inches long, with a wing-span of 36 inches and it weighs about 9 ounces. It seemed a little smaller. The Great Horned Owl is generally 22 inches long, with a wing-span of 44 inches, and it weighs 3.1 pounds. When the owl was released, it flew low (which is typical) and landed in snow. Several onlookers, including Susan, went to the owl and made sure that it landed in a tree. Normally, the Long-eared Owl is solitary, but in the winter, it may roost with several other owls for safety and warmth in a clump of several trees. Before its release several people wanted pictures and this beautiful little owl was very alert and almost seemed to pose for the pictures. The release took place at about 5:30 p.m. and it was a very special event for all who were there.

I was just getting ready to write this letter when I heard about the sad shooting that took place in Tucson where Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords was a victim. I was introduced to Gabrielle when she first decided to run for her Congressional seat. She spoke at an Audubon Council meeting and asked for our endorsement. I was happy that we voted to endorse her. She has proven to be a great credit to our state and it is very sad to think that someone would shoot such a talented and dedicated public servant. I think, after watching the last two elections and seeing how negative they were, hopefully we will learn that what we say and do can have dire consequences that we don't expect. I hope the Congresswoman will recover, as well as all of the others that were injured on that fateful day.

I want to thank all of the brave souls who braved the elements for the Christmas bird count. We had nine people for the count. They were; Sue Sitko, Barb Davis, Jessie Cuiilty (from Phoenix), Tom and Liz Jernigan, Bob and Loretta Pena, Mary Ellen Bittorf, and Terri Wiley (my daughter from Phoenix). It was a pretty cold day, but not terrible. There weren't many small birds in the trees, but there were some good numbers of water fowl.

Remember that our next meeting will not be until March 2, 2011.

Happy New Year to you all ... and enjoy Birding!!  
Mary Ellen

### White Mountain Audubon Local Chapter Membership Form

Membership dues for White Mountain Audubon Society are: **Individual- \$10/year** and **Family- \$15/year**. Please pay dues by March 31, 2011. Your **tax-deductible** membership supports our on-going programs and activities, as well as future new projects. **Your funds do make a difference!!**

Please renew my annual Chapter Membership. Enclosed you'll find my \$10 or \$15 dues.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
Mailing address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form and your dues to:

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

**PLEASE NOTE** that in our January and March newsletters, you will find this annual membership dues form. In our other newsletters (May, July, September, and November), you will find our "general donation" form, which will now be used for donations above and beyond your \$10 or \$15 dues. Please use this form only for your dues. **Thank you very much!**

### Timber Mesa Christmas Bird Count December 18, 2010

Mary Ellen, her daughter Terri Wiley, Barb Davis, Sue Sitko, Jesse Culty, Tom and Liz Jernigan and Bob and Loretta Pena were the participants in the CBC for our area. We met at 7:00 am and decided on which areas we would cover and then got started.

The temperature was 19 degrees in Pinetop. it was gray and cloudy and there was a slight drizzle as we began the count. The high temperature for the day was 30 degrees. As the morning progressed the wind picked up and kept us all bundled up braving the cold air around the different lakes and ponds and other areas we birded.

Everywhere we birded it seemed the birds were smarter than we were, as hardly any came out from their cover to be counted. I suspect it was one of the lowest count years ever for the Timber Mesa CBC.

Only 29 species were counted with 1126 individuals. Mallards were in abundance in the water and Ravens in the sky. The Mallard count was 462 and the Raven count was 250.

Thanks very much to each of you who came out and braved the weather and counted the birds!!

## Birding on the Big Island

The light seeps out of the night and with it the sounds of our bird friends. The “chink, chink” of the Northern Cardinal, and the delicate “pik” of the curious Japanese White-Eye are the first morning’s callers. The laughing call of the petite Zebra Dove and the bellowing “cooo” of the Spotted Dove follow. As the light completely replaces dark, the loud cries of the ‘IO or Hawaiian Hawk, the only endemic Hawk to the island, stirs the air waves. The raptor, about the size of the Cooper’s Hawk, takes flight and soars among the trade winds gracefully.

This is the morning routine of the farm that I am working on, in the small town of Kapoho on the east side of the Big Island of Hawaii. This is the rainforest side, the wet side. This is the side where you can hear the menacing Pacific Ocean waves through the canopy of 175 year old mango trees and almost feel them shake the black lava foundation below your feet. Out at the coast, about a mile from my bungalow, the buoyant chattering of the Hawaiian Noddy challenges the ocean’s roar. Their elegant forms dart by the waves before they crash into the cliffside.

One of my favorite birding spots on the island are the kipukas just outside of the entrance to the Hawaii Volcanoes National Park. A kipuka is a newly formed forest that occurs out of an old lava flow. Usually a kipuka is associated with native species of flora only, mainly Koa and Ohia trees and Hapu’u ferns.

There is a tranquil 1- mile one way path from Kipuka Pualuu to Kipuka Kii. The birds were everywhere with the overwhelming abundance of them being Apapane. The Hawaiian Honeycreeper is literally in the 1,000’s of individuals, really beautiful and extremely active. The other avian friends found were: Yellow-fronted Canary, Nene (Hawaiian Goose- endemic), Nutmeg Mannakin, Kalij Pheasants, Hawaii Amakihi (endemic), Red-billed Leiothrix, Japanese White-Eye, Hawaii Elepaio (endemic), Hawaiian Hawk (endemic), Omao (Hawaiian Thrush-endemic), and Japanese Bush Warbler.

My other favorite is a trail that wanders up the north slope of the Mauna Loa Mountain. Here is my journal entry from one outing:

The Pu’uO’o trail is 7.4 miles one way. My intent was to travel 3.5 miles in to make a 7 mile day. Well, needless to say I was often side-tracked (a wimp’s way of saying I need to be in a little better shape). I did manage 4.5 miles however.

The trail goes through 1855 and 1881 lava flows. The a’a lava flow (which is described as loose, broken, sharp and spiny surface that covers a massive dense core) is tough to walk on, as there are many egg-sized rocks to trip and slide on. The pahoehoe lava flow (smooth, billowy, undulating) is easy and usually covered with grasses. This flow is also the type that creates lava tubes. When I was hiking through a section of this flow every now and then I would hear a hollow thud under foot. I realized I must be walking on top of a lava tube. Really wild to think about walking on top of a cave, how stable is it really?!!

After walking across a lava flow you always came to a kipuka, the older the flow, the older the emergent kipuka. As the trees of the kipuka, the Koa (Acacia) and Ohia, grew in size so did the bird activity. I walked through four and they seemed to become older the further I walked. About 2.25 miles in (my side-tracked point) the bird-life was incredible. I was overwhelmed by the songs and the sheer numbers of native species. For those out there who have down point count bird surveys, or understand what they are, let me give you a taste:

I stopped at 5 locations in the last kipuka and each time the bird census was about the same; here’s the average:

- 5- Iiwi( beautiful redbird with red feet and orange de-curving bill)
- 5- Omao
- 3- Hawaiian Amakhi
- 9- Apapane
- 2-Japanese white-Eye
- 2- Kalij Pheasant
- 1-Hawaiian Creeper

Very birdy... although two friends had escaped me on my adventures on that trail (I had taken four). The bright red male Akepa and the bird with the longest decurving bill still in existence on the islands- the Akiapola’au. Maybe I will have one final opportunity to see these two or maybe they will elude me until I venture back this way...

The Big Island has the most endemic species of any of the islands, but just like everywhere, sadly it has seen some of its birds go extinct due to intensive logging, habitat loss and development. It makes it even more of a blessing to see the native birds at home in their native kipukas, enjoying their native forage in their native environment. Truly a wonderful experience.

~Jimmy Videle



Steven D'Amato

## SIGHTINGS FOR NOVEMBER 2010

Liz and Tom Jernigan saw a **Northern Flicker** in their front yard in Lakeside. In Lakeside the Plasters reported **Northern Flicker** and **Cassin's Finch**. The Penas had a **Red-naped Sapsucker** in their yard in Show Low. In Show Low also, Steve and Mary Gordon sighted a **Northern Goshawk**. In Lakeside, Yvonne Bevacqua had **Northern Flicker**, **Stellar's Jay**, doves and crows. Doris Raspa reported **Pine Siskin**, **Stellar's Jay**, **Acorn Woodpecker**, **Northern Flicker**, **Ravens**, **Ravens**, and more **Ravens**. Judy Ginn had **Pine Siskin**, **Stellar's Jay**, **Northern Flicker**, **Acorn & Hairy Woodpecker**, **White-breasted** and **Pygmy Nuthatch**, and juncos. Sue Sitko saw **Clark's Nutcrackers** in Lakeside. (In the Nov. /Dec. newsletter, it was mistakenly reported that Cattle Egret were seen at Show Low Lake. They were **Snowy Egrets**.)

Thanks everyone for letting us know what you have seen!

### Member's Update

Chuck Bittorf recently had knee surgery and has had a challenging recovery time. He was at Sierra Blanca Rehab Center until the end of December.

Sally Walker, a longtime member of WMAS had hip surgery in North Carolina where her daughter lives. She is recovering there and will return to her southern Arizona home soon.

Doris Raspa had surgery also recently and is now recovering.

Mary Ellen Bittorf has had health concerns this last year also.

Please know Chuck, Sally, Doris and Mary Ellen that each of you is in our thoughts and we send many, many well-wishes to each of you.

### Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge

Bosque del Apache is just a four-hour drive from the White Mountains and is such an amazing place to observe waterfowl at this time of the year. If you have never been, I encourage you to drive there and enjoy some great birding.

Each fall tens of thousands of birds, including Sandhill Cranes, geese and ducks make the refuge their winter home. Besides the waterfowl there are numerous other species that abound on the Refuge.

On December 14, 2010, the official bird count included the following species:

Sandhill Cranes	6,862
Light Geese	30,785
Ducks	69,246
Canada Geese	455
Bald & Golden Eagles	4
Hawks & Owls	44

The refuge is located off I-25 a few miles south of Socorro, NM. This is the perfect time to visit Bosque del Apache!

# Great Backyard Bird Count Is Coming

February 18-21, 2011

The GBBC is an annual four-day event that engages bird watchers of all ages in counting birds to create a real-time snapshot of where the birds are across the continent and in Hawaii.

Each checklist submitted by these "citizen scientists" helps researchers at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Bird Studies Canada and the National Audubon Society learn more about how the birds are doing—and how to protect them and the environment we share. Last year, participants turned in more than 93,600 checklists online, creating the continent's largest instantaneous snapshot of bird populations ever recorded. You may go to National Audubon Society to find the 2010 summary of the GBBC.

Anyone can take part in the Great Backyard Bird Count, from novice bird watchers to experts. Participants count birds for as little as 15 minutes (or as long as they wish) on one or more days of the event and report their sightings online at [www.birdcount.org](http://www.birdcount.org).

*"Taking part in the Great Backyard Bird Count is a great way to get outside with family and friends, have fun, and help birds—all at the same time. Anyone who can identify even a few species can provide important information that enables scientists to learn more about how the environment is changing and how that affects our conservation priorities."*

[www.whitemountainaudubon.org](http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org)



Steven D'Amato

## Bird Notes Longspurs

After the Sparrows in the bird guide come the Longspurs. There are 4 of them and they are a species that I was unfamiliar with until receiving an email from Eric Hough. Eric was birding east of Flagstaff at Babbitt Tank, off of I-40 on Buffalo Ranch Road, and saw 2 Lapland Longspurs and over 50 Chestnut-collared Longspurs on December 12th.

According to the Cornell School of Ornithology the **Lapland Longspur** is a common songbird of the Arctic tundra where it winters in open fields across much of the United States and southern Canada. The breeding male is striking with a black head and breast outlined with a white stripe coming back from the eye. The nape is reddish-brown. In winter the plumages of both male and female are duller, with both having broad buffy eyebrows, buffier underparts and white on the belly and undertails. It is 6 ¼ inches long. The Birder's Handbook states that "the Lapland is unequalled in extent of circumpolar breeding range." Laplands nest on the ground and are generally found on open ground such as fields, beaches and pastures. Their diet consists of spiders, grass, sedge and forb seeds.

The **Chestnut-collared Longspur** is a bird of the Great Plains of the Interior West. It is the smallest of the Longspurs at 6 inches in length. It's white tail is marked with a blackish shaped triangle. The breeding male has a black and white head, yellow face, cream-colored throat and a black belly. The female is pale sandy overall with blurry streaks on the belly. Diet is the same as Lapland's, spiders, grass, sedge and forb seeds. They will regularly visit water, if available, to drink and bathe. It's distinctive coloration makes it stand out in the short, dense grass prairie where it breeds. They are said to be fairly common in southern AZ in winter.

To read Eric's very interesting posting about his sightings go to: Northern Arizona Audubon and click the AZ Birding Community Forums page.

Information for article came from *The Birder's Handbook*, *The Sibley Guide to Birds* and *National Geographic Field Guide to the Birds*.

## CONSERVATION

An interesting article appeared in the *New York Times* recently about the city of Kristianstad, Sweden. Ten years ago the city determined to wean itself from fossil fuels. Presently the city of Kristianstad and the surrounding county with a population of 80,000 essentially use no oil, natural gas, or coal to heat homes and businesses even during the long frigid winters. It is completely different than 20 years ago when all of their heat came from fossil fuels.

How did it happen? Not so much with solar panels or wind turbines, but instead it generates energy from a variety of ingredients like potato peels, manure, used cooking oil, stale cookies and pig intestines. On the outskirts of the city sits a 10 year old plant that uses a biological process to transform these materials into biogas which is a form of methane. The gas is burned to make heat and electricity or is refined into fuel for cars.

Once this plant got going the city fathers began to see fuel everywhere. Kristianstad also burns gas coming from old landfills, sewage ponds and wood waste from flooring factories and tree prunings.

Kristianstad has been able to halve its fossil fuel use and has reduced the city's carbon dioxide emissions by one-quarter in the last decade. Lennart Erfors, the engineer who is overseeing the transition in this colorful city of 18<sup>th</sup> century row houses said, "It's a much more secure supply- we didn't want to buy oil anymore from the Middle East or Norway. And it has created jobs in the energy sector."

Information is from the *New York Times*, December 10, 2010.

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Last year the *Birdwatcher's Digest* magazine began a program called *Birds & Beans* coffee. This program enables people to buy Smithsonian Migratory Bird Center independently certified 'Bird Friendly' coffee. 'Bird Friendly' means the migratory songbirds have an increased chance to survive while in their tropical wintering grounds.

The biggest threat to migratory songbirds in Latin America is tropical habitat destruction. The traditional 'rustic canopy' method of coffee farming done on small farms has provided a buffer against forest loss. But now that type of farming is under threat, from large scale sun farms that use fertilizer, which kills songbirds. Most of the coffee we drink in the US is grown on this type of farm. So...by buying certified 'Bird Friendly' coffee here, we are increasing the chances of seeing our beloved songbirds each spring and summer. Go to *Birdwatcher's Digest* and search *Birds & Beans* coffee. There are several choices.



## Where to write

President Barack Obama  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.  
Washington, DC 20206  
202-456-1111

U. S. Sen. Jon Kyl  
702 Hart Bldg.  
Washington, DC 20510  
202-225-3121 or  
1-888-355-3588

Gov. Jan Brewer  
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Rep. Brenda Barton  
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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.**

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