



## APRIL EDITION 2023

### **Out on a Limb by Tom Jernigan (WMAS Vice President & Treasurer): BIRDS OF PLAY**

You might think twice before you call someone a bird brain. Scientific evidence has pointed out that some birds are pretty smart. They can use tools and play. Even more than tool use, play, especially social play, is an indicator of intelligence.

Many different species of birds are known to use tools. One example is the Australian Kite. They make a practice of picking up burning twigs and flying them to new areas with dry grass where they drop them to start new fires. Then they catch and eat the bugs that flee the fire. (Officer, it wasn't my campfire that started the forest fire! It was that darn bird!)

Another example of tool use is the Carrion Crow of Japan. They drop walnuts onto the pavement so cars will crush the shells. Then they stand at the crosswalk with pedestrians. When the light changes, they walk out to get the nuts.

The best indicator of relative brain size is not tool use but rather social play. This kind of play seems to be limited to parrots and corvids. One example is an observed incident where Magpies teamed up to swing each other. One of them would hang upside down by one foot while the other two would push the swing back and forth.

Being able to observe such behavior would be the highlight of anyone's day. A while back when I was sitting quietly in our backyard, a Cooper's Hawk caught a lizard about 20 feet away from me. Rather than eating it right away, it started playing with it, tossing it into the air, and jumping and flying up to catch it. I don't know if it was having fun but I was, just watching it.

Left: Pinyon Jays are in the group (Covidae) that is known for their intelligence (photo by Doug Sgambelluri); Right: Ravens and Red-tailed Hawks can be enemies but may also "play" together (photo by Gaston Porterie)



## White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2023 Chapter Officers:

President: Mary Williams	480-235-1792
Vice-President: Tom Jernigan	928-532-1510
Secretary: Liz Jernigan	928-532-1510
Treasurer: Tom Jernigan	928-532-1510
Field Trips: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Newsletter: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Membership: Susie Walker	480-205-6119
Webmaster: Alan Vickers	

## 2023 Board Members:

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Mary Freemon, Susie Walker, Gerry Hodge, Carol Axford, & Rob Bettaso.



### President's Corner by Mary Williams:

**Happy Spring!** Seen any signs? I have! On a brief overnighter to bird the Holbrook and Winslow areas on March 9 and 10, I was happy to see a Common Raven carrying a stick and then saw him/her land on a rock cleft with obvious nest construction at the eBird hotspot at the Holbrook Wastewater Treatment Ponds. As I was scanning the WTP awhile later, I was surprised and pleased to see a male Ruddy Duck sporting his bright cinnamon-colored breeding plumage and showing that distinctive Spring blue bill – as well as an especially tip-tilted tail in pursuit of one of the females. Since then, I have spotted Turkey Vultures, Osprey and Black Phoebe. Spring!

House Finch breed where I live north of Show Low and are a delight year-round as they take advantage of our feeding stations. This time of year, they begin to attract mates and establish territory with that iconic sweet singing so common all over AZ. Spring! (If you check our website, [whitemountainaudubon.org](http://whitemountainaudubon.org), you might hear them singing.)

On our website, you also can see an article that I was asked to submit for the January issue of The Maverick magazine distributed in the White Mountains. *Let's Go Birding!* could help enlighten people who don't understand why we love birds and learning more about them.

Check the posters below as well as on our website to mark your calendars or tell others about upcoming classes and events. Our first 2023 meeting at 6:30 on Wednesday, April 5, at the Nature Center will be a good time to visit again with so many of us who live here – as well as with our early-arriving 'snow birds.' I'll serve as guest speaker and will focus on plans for 2023 as well as show PowerPoints of the *Best Birds of 2022*. It will be a chance to revisit the strange-looking Shoebill Stork as well as see lots of Cornell Lab photos of those lovely local species submitted by attendees at our monthly meetings.

Remember, if you know someone who qualifies, April 8 is the deadline for applications for both the 2023 high school and college scholarships offered by WMAS.

Note too that we're beginning a new series of PowerPoint Presentations at Northland Pioneer College this year. The first, *Beginning Birding: Basics*, will be at the Show Low Campus on April 18 at 6:30 and there will be a bird walk the next morning for those who attend. (The *Basics* class will be repeated at the Show Low Library on June 19 at 6:00 as the first in a *Hotspots* series there this summer.)

Spring? Another noticeable sign is a reduction in the numbers of our wintering waterfowl. However, we can expect to see our beautiful breeding migrants arrive soon. (Get those hummingbird feeders out this month!) May 13 is good day

to do a thorough check on new arrivals throughout our area. That Saturday is the annual Global Big Day and I will serve as the Navajo County coordinator again. You will be hearing from me soon about your assignments if you have volunteered in the past. Sue Sitko will again serve as coordinator for Apache County. We are both looking for more volunteers, so contact either of us if you too can survey for birds that day.

Wishing you good birding and many blessings, Mary

**BIRDING CLASSES**

LEARN ABOUT BIRDS & BIRDING

**BEGINNING BIRDING CLASSES**



NPC White Mountain Campus, Show Low

Attendees of these classes will receive priority invitations to attend bird walks led by the instructor.

Presented by the President of the White Mountain Audubon Society, this series of 3 classes will feature information about the species of birds most likely to be found locally, and how to find and enjoy them with a focus on ways to protect their declining populations.

**TUESDAYS 6:30-8**  
April 18, 25, May 2  
\$5 each

Northland Pioneer College  
COMMUNITY & CORPORATE LEARNING

928-536-6244 | ccl@npc.edu | npc.edu/noncredit-classes

**REGISTER NOW TO SAVE YOUR SPOT**

**Free!**

**THE BIRDS OF WHITERIVER BEGINNING BIRDING CLASS**



**PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE WHITE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY: MARY WILLIAMS**

NPC Whiteriver Center

Northland Pioneer College  
COMMUNITY & CORPORATE LEARNING

This PowerPoint based class of approximately 90 minutes will feature information about the species of birds most likely to be found on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation and about how to find and enjoy them. It will also focus on ways to protect the declining populations of birds in this area.

**\*CHILDREN AGES 12-16 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.**

**WEDNESDAY**  
May 10th, 10am-12pm  
Tuition cost: free

928-536-6244 | ccl@npc.edu | npc.edu/noncredit-classes

**WMAS CALENDAR:**

For 2023 we expect that **all monthly programs** will continue to start at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January, February & March when there are no meetings)**. The programs are free and open to all. You may call **Liz Jernigan (928-532-1511)** for more information on monthly programs and special events. Monthly meetings are held at the **White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside**.



**March 18<sup>th</sup> - The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip:** Monthly bird watching field trips on the **3rd Sat of every month** and alternate between Rob Bettaso & Jon Orona. If you're interested in attending, feel free to give me a call (Rob: 928-368-8481) and leave a message so that I can return your call to give you the details for the upcoming trip.

Also, on the **fourth Sat of each month** I lead a "Fitness Birding" outing that combines slightly strenuous activities (longer hikes, bicycling, paddling, X/C skiing) with birding. The next **Fitness Birding trip will be March 25<sup>th</sup>**. Feel free to give me a call if you're interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

## **MOST RECENT 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS (Rob Bettaso):**

On March 18<sup>th</sup>, four of us joined our expert birding guide Jon Orona, as we visited various sites along Hwy 260 between Pinetop and Springerville to observe resident and migrant species as well as nesting raptors. Our 1<sup>st</sup> stop was to watch a Rough-legged Hawk that Jon had predicted might still be in the vicinity of Pole Knoll – the rough-legged was cruising the grasslands near the snow drift fences. The morning wound up being a raptor extravaganza with 7 different species observed including nesting Red-tailed Hawks (see photos down below).

For the “Fitness Birding” event on March 25<sup>th</sup>, I thought it might be better if that day was dedicated to the annual Eagle Fest that the AZ Game & Fish Department leads (thank you Dan Groebner for your coordination of that event).

Field trip photos: Upper photos by Jon Orona (left: a soaring Red-tailed Hawk; right: a gliding Rough-legged Hawk). Lower photos by Gaston Porterie (left: birding the South Fork, LCR; right: Chihuahuan Meadowlark on a mullen stalk).



**UPDATES & REMINDERS:**

Have you paid your annual membership dues? If not, a friendly reminder that WMAS relies on membership dues for such important Chapter actions as our annual Scholarship Awards to White Mountain area graduating seniors who have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in natural history, conservation, and other related fields. Thank you for helping us to continue to make such programs a regular part of our Chapter mission. Note that the Donation form is at the end of every Newsletter. Dues are for the year in which they are paid and not good for 12 months following payment (unless you pay in January).

Also, if you are not a member of the National Audubon Society, we encourage all Chapter members to join the national organization. Information on joining the national organization is easy as you only need to type "National Audubon Society" into your internet search engine to obtain the simple instructions for joining.

And remember, you can always feel free to offer your assistance to the Board. For that matter, there are some on the Board who are interested in moving on from the Board to focus on other aspects of their lives, so, we are always interested in hearing from anyone who might want to accept the fun challenges of filling a Board position! **We are especially keen to recruit diverse candidates to be a part of WMAS, including more people below the age of 60 (so that we can plan for our Chapter's future) and also more people that are representative of the various demographic groups found in the White Mountains. And remember, you can be on the Board without being an Officer – in fact, you can even just attend a Board meeting as a guest. Please feel free to join us (call Rob: 928-368-8481).**

**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 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**