



## AUGUST EDITION 2024

### Out on a Limb by Rob Bettaso (WMAS Field Trips Coordinator & Newsletter Editor):

H. D. Thoreau in his classic book "Walden," said that in his humble abode he had 3 chairs: the 1<sup>st</sup> for **solitude**, the 2<sup>nd</sup> for **companionship**, and the 3<sup>rd</sup> for **society**. My July birding was somewhat similar.

On one of my near-daily, **solitary**, Rim Road walks I not only tallied a satisfying number of different species, I also observed an interesting interaction between a group of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers and a Steller's Jay. It started off with a lone gnatcatcher scolding a nearby jay while they both perched in a small oak. The argument escalated when another gnatcatcher joined the fray and, between the 2 tiny birds, they managed to chase the jay to the top of a 30 foot pine. Soon, another, and then another, gnatcatcher joined in the mobbing and when I last saw the jay, he was heading north with no-less than 6 gnatcatchers in hot pursuit. I haven't done any research yet, but I'm wondering if sometimes gnatcatchers live in a sort of clan/family group like Acorn Woodpeckers and Harris Hawks and, if so, is part of the purpose so that they can protect their fledglings by mobbing potential threats?

Second, on a trip to the high country (in a chunk of riparian habitat, off-the-beaten-path & somewhere between Greer and Springerville) my **companion** Mike and I were enjoying an early morning birding hike. We had seen several exciting species including White-throated Swifts, MacGillivray's Warblers, a Peregrine Falcon, Clark's Nutcrackers, and a family of Williamson's Sapsuckers. At one point, we paused to try to find a small bird that we had seen flitting in the thick, streamside willows. Finally, it showed itself sufficiently for us to see that it was a warbler and, since warblers can sometimes be a challenge to identify to species, we settled in for a prolonged period of monitoring the bird as he foraged in the dense greenery. After about 10 minutes of sporadic viewings of the warbler in his various postures and from different angles, we finally decided that we had a possible hybrid on our hands. The warbler in questions bore several of the distinct field marks and some of the behaviors of both Virginia's and Lucy's warblers. Were we witnessing an example of "speciation"? Once again, it is time for me to hit my old text books, and delve into the topics of bird taxonomy, genetics, and evolution.

Lastly, on an outing to Jacque's Marsh, a small **society** of 3 birders (Chuck, Gary, and me) experienced a wonderful couple of hours walking, conversing, and birding as we made our way around the wetlands. Chuck and I have birded together before and I always enjoy his company; Gary was from out-of-state and visiting his longtime pal Chuck, so it was my first time to bird with Gary. Both of them are not only bird-watchers, but also avid wildlife photographers and some of their vivid photos can be found in this edition of the Newsletter. One of Chuck's photos shows 2 Ospreys together in flight. Are the 2 birds a parent and its progeny? A mated pair? Siblings? Friends? Strangers? Sorry, I have no answers, only more questions.

Yes, more questions, but also a never-ending sense wonder at the world of Nature. I'm also quite grateful for being able to explore Nature in **solitude**, with **companions**, and as part of a small **society** of folks who seek no higher purpose in life than to respect and enjoy this planet's biodiversity.

Remember, never scrimp when it comes to your outdoor time! Happy bird-watching (and general nature study).



Photos above by **Chuck Lanska** (left: Ospreys; right: Steller's Jay)

**White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2024 Chapter Officers:**

President: Mary Williams	480-235-1792
Vice-President: Tom Jernigan	928-892-3004
Secretary: Ron Pedersen	505-313-9343
Treasurer: Tom Jernigan	928-892-3004
Field Trips: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Newsletter: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Membership: Susie Walker	480-205-6119
Webmaster: Alan Vickers	

**2024 Board Members:**

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Mary Freemon, Susie Walker, Ron Pedersen, & Rob Bettaso.



**President's Corner by Mary Williams:**

Greetings Birders! Are you ready for Fall migration? Do you know that Fall in the birding world begins on August 1? So... let's begin the Fall migration season with our first Thursday bird walk on August 1 by meeting at the Big Springs parking lot on Woodland Road, north of the Nature Center, at 6:30 for a stroll to the amphitheater.

Opportunities to check early migration in Apache County include a Field Trip on Thursday, August 8, to the Greer area. Meet at Squirrel Springs Recreation Area parking lot at 7:00 (first of a few outhouses at stops in Greer) OR convoy from the Nature Center at 6:00. Carpooling recommended, especially if weather allows birding South Fork later that morning. If desired, convoy to Springerville, stopping at McDonalds, to bird and picnic at the Becker Lake Recreation Area, with takeout options from McD's or the delicious barbecue at the Gateway.

I'm spending the night at Lyman Lake State Park in my camper van. Anyone who wishes to join me for some birding there late on Thursday and early on Friday, before I prepare for the class at the Round Valley Library at 3:00 in Eagar, can check on reservations for RVs or tents as well as in the little cabins in the Park. (Jon Orona, an avid birder who is a forester with AZDFFM is the 8/9 guest speaker for the 3:00 NPC-sponsored class.)

Another Apache County birding opportunity is on Saturday August 10. Meet at 7:00 in the parking area of the West

Baldy Trail 94 for optional bird walks: a more challenging one with Ken McByrd-Bell thru the forest down to Sheep Crossing, or an easier one with me from the Sheep Crossing parking area to the bridge and through the meadow.

You might want to close the month with 'Migrants,' my class at the NPC campus in Show Low at 6:00 on Thursday, August 29. Pre-Registering is not required but it is recommended on the Northland Pioneer College website. There will be a follow-up bird walk on Saturday August 31. And...Wishing you even more migrants in September!

Blessings, Mary

Photos below (Clockwise: Violet-green Swallow by **Ron Pedersen**; Common Yellowthroat by **Terri Rieser**; MacGillivray's Warbler by **Tony Contreras**)



#### **White Mountain Audubon Society Calendar:**

For 2024 we expect that **all monthly Audubon programs** will continue to start at **6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month (except in December, January, February & March when there are no meetings)**. The programs are free and open to all. Monthly meetings are held at the **White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside**.

**August 7<sup>th</sup> General meeting & presentation: Margaret Dykeman will discuss birding in both the Phoenix Valley and in Northern, AZ (6:30p.m. at the Nature Center).**

**The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trips:** Monthly bird watching field trips on the **3rd Sat of every month**, alternate between Rob Bettaso & Jon Orona. If you're interested in attending, feel free to give me a call and leave a message so that I can return your call to give you the details for the upcoming trip. The **next outing is August 17<sup>th</sup>**. 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 August 24<sup>th</sup>**. Feel free to leave me a message if you're interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

**SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS IN JULY:** I was joined by 5 bird watchers at Pintail & Telephone "lakes" -- which are actually constructed wetlands/ponds and are latter stages of municipal water treatment facilities. Although some of us think that the local wetlands have not retained as many waterbirds as in some recent summers (perhaps due to higher precipitation levels in the northern parts of various bird's summer ranges) we nonetheless enjoyed seeing numerous songbirds (e.g. Common Yellowthroats, various swallows, corvids, & flycatchers) and some of the loyal/local waterbirds (including White-faced Ibis, 2 species of grebes, & 2 species of cormorants).

For our 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday outing, DC and I parked at Billy Ck and hiked up the steady grade to Springer Mountain Fire Look-out (the hike up really got our hearts pumping, so it definitely qualified as "Fitness Birding"). We enjoyed the sights, songs, and calls of numerous bird species and also, because of recent rains, we also enjoyed the wide landscape of views that one can enjoy from atop Springer Mtn. --Rob



Photo above: WMAS shared some of our bird posters with **White Mountain Community Garden** in Show Low for a presentation there for children by Tracy Koslowski. The posters will be used again when we have a table at the WMCG Open House on August 10 from 9 to 3:00.

Photos below (clockwise): Lewis's Woodpecker by **John Jung**; N. Flickers by **Chuck Lanska**; birders at AZGFD's Sipe's Wildlife Area by **Terri Rieser**; Ken at Sipe's W.A. by **Carol Axford**.



#### **UPDATES & REMINDERS:**

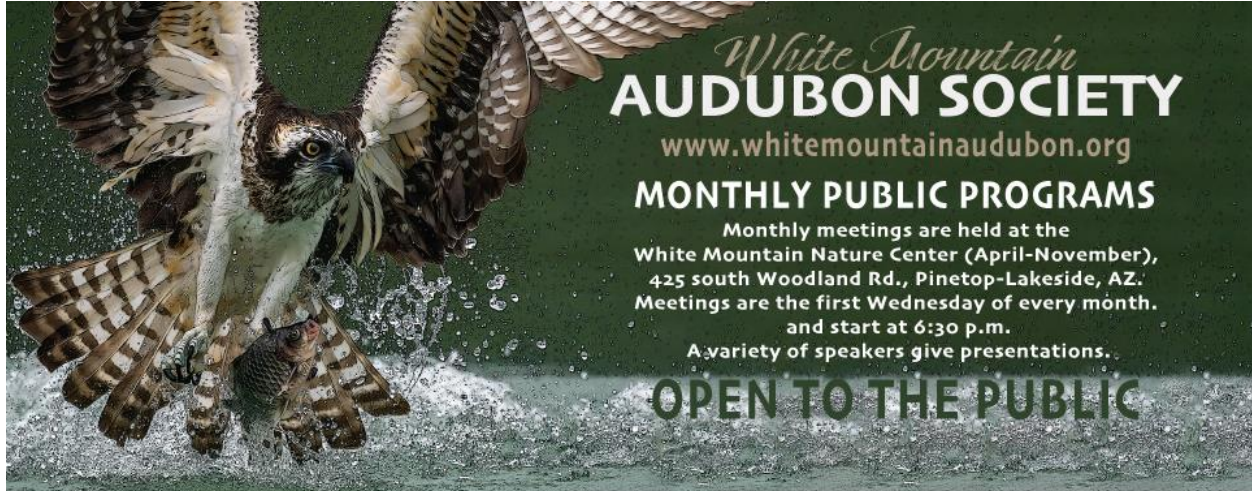
Have you paid your annual membership dues? Thank you have and if not, note that the membership form is at the end of every Newsletter. Dues are for the year in which they are paid and are **not** necessarily valid for 12 months following payment (unless you pay in December or January).

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).

We have a new ad in **Anne Groebner's Outdoors Southwest** magazine (a monthly publication focusing on our White Mountains environment). You can check out Anne's OSW at the following website: **OutdoorsSW.com** or you can pick-up a hardcopy version at the Nature Center, Safeway, Town Hall, and many other locations.



**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 \_\_\_\_\_

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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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! LIKE US ON FACEBOOK and visit our website.

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.