
# JUNE EDITION 2025 (OUR LONGEST BIRDING DAYS!)

**"Out on a Limb" by Rob Bettaso – White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) Board Member**

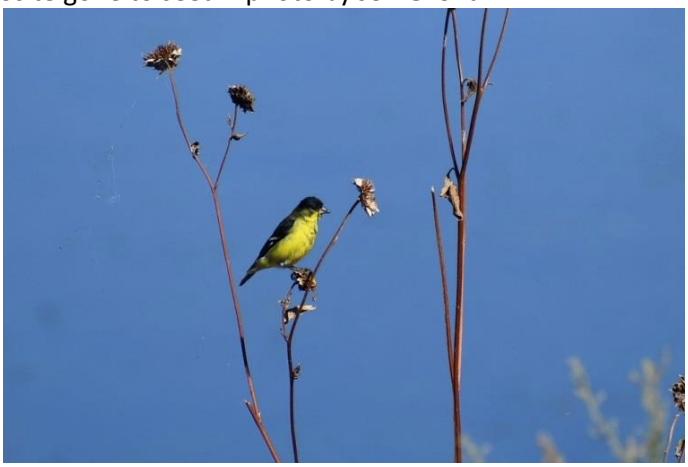
Occasionally, the first bird of the day is also the most exciting. So it was earlier today when I stepped out my front door a few minutes after the rising sun had cleared the pines which block my view of the eastern horizon-line. To the west, I could hear the whiny, slightly melancholy call-notes of a goldfinch high up in a freshly leafed-out cottonwood tree. I drew up my binos to examine a canary-yellow bird mixed in among the shimmering leaves and was pleased to see that it was an American Goldfinch - a rarely observed member of the Finch Family (at least in the Pinetop/Lakeside area) that is much less often seen than our fairly common Lesser Goldfinches (a closely related, but distinct species).

Most years, in fact, I ***only*** see Lesser Goldfinches here in town and not any American Goldfinches. This year has been different, as today wasn't the first American Goldy I have seen in 2025. A few weeks earlier, while birding the Old Hatchery Trail near the Game and Fish offices, Millie (our newest Audubon Board member) spotted a solitary American Goldfinch, again, high up in a tree near the parking lot. Later, she spotted 4 more, perching together down in a willow along Billy Creek. We were both thrilled at the excellent view of such a stunning and seldom seen species.

Below are four evocative photos of the two species of goldfinches that we have in our area. If you have time, check a Peterson Field Guide that illustrates the differences between the American & the Lesser Goldfinches. For that matter, you may want to compare the goldfinches to some of the other songbird groups that also have several yellowish species – including warblers, orioles, & tanagers. Make sure to check both males and females as sometimes only one of the genders have a yellowish color. Keep in mind, being able to tell one yellowish species from another eventually becomes a fairly straight-forward exercise for a bird-watcher. A trickier issue pertains to why in some years, a species of bird seems to shows up in higher (or lower) numbers than "normal."

Given the complex reasons as to why birds show up when and where they do, I'm afraid that will have to remain a topic for another day and another place. In the meantime, we can all simply enjoy getting out and discreetly, carefully, benignly observing the birds that happen to be in local-area habitats (of which there are many). And remember, the White Mountain Audubon Society is here to help you develop and/or expand your appreciation of birds; so please feel free to join us for our classes, presentations, field trips, and other events. Otherwise, about the only other thing you might want to do before you hit the birding trail is to clean your binoculars and grab your field guide….

Two species of goldfinches in all their glory: (below/left) an adult male American Goldfinch, classically perching on a seedy thistle - photo by **Glenn Berry**; (below/right) an adult male Lesser Goldfinch ("black-backed" form) effortlessly perched on a composite gone to seed – photo by **Jon Orona**.



(Below/left) A winter plumage American Goldfinch eyes a feeder – photo by **Jon Orona**; (below/ right) a pair of adult Lesser Goldfinches ("green-backed" form) at an important watering hole – photo by **Gaston Porterie**.

**White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2025 Chapter Officers:**

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| President: Mary Williams | 480-235-1792 |
| Secretary: Millie Emerson | 316-295-6404 |
| Treasurer: Ron Pedersen | 505-313-9343 |
| Field Trips: Rob Bettaso | 928-368-8481 |
| Newsletter: Rob Bettaso | 928-368-8481 |
| Membership: Susie Walker | 480-205-6119 |
| Webmaster: Alan Vickers | |

**2025 WMAS Board Members:**

Mary Williams, Millie Emerson, Mary Freemon, Susie Walker, Ron Pedersen, & Rob Bettaso.

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

Do you feed hummingbirds? Has anyone ever told you to stop? A friend recently told me her neighbor told her to stop feeding hummingbirds - which she has done for many years - because it hurts them. The theory set forth was that they need to get their food from flowers, not from sugar water.

Hmmmm. Obviously, flowers are important to hummingbirds and it's why so many of us remind people to plant them - especially the native types on which hummingbirds have thrived for millennia. However, how many native flowering plants do you see when you look out your window at your hummingbird feeders?

Yes, many people are hurting hummingbirds by feeding them. But my friend is not one of them! She, like me, supplements their diets as they cope with the destroyed and declining habitats along their migration routes and breeding areas.

We keep our feeders clean and refill them every few days because we know molds and bacteria build up and can kill them. We never ever use red dyes, knowing the scientists have found it harms them.

We also never use poisons in our yards because we know tiny insects comprise a major part of their diets. We leave the spider webs they need for nest building. But do our neighbors do the same? Do you?

Wishing you good birding and many blessings, Mary

Above: An adult male Broad-billed Hummingbird in southern Arizona (Photo by **Susie Walker**)

**White Mountain Audubon Society Calendar:**

For 2025 we expect that all monthly Audubon programs will continue to start at 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month and will have our monthly meetings only from May thru Oct. The programs are free and open to all. Monthly meetings are held at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside.

**June 4th Speaker: Ron Miller** will give a presentation on "Birds that Fly Underwater" at 6:30 p.m. at the White Mountain Nature Center. This is one you won't want to miss!

**The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trips**: Monthly bird watching field trips on the 3rd Sat of every month; usually led by Rob Bettaso but also by Jon Orona when he is available (and if others would like to lead, pls give me a call so we can discuss). 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 **June 21st**. 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 **June 28th**. Feel free to leave me a message if you're interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

**OUR WHITE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY (WMAS) MAY FIELD TRIPS:**

I joined an AZ Game & Fish colleague for birding at Jacques Marsh on the 3rd Sat of the month. We saw many of the typical birds of the wetlands, forest-edge, and fields, tho it seemed like both diversity and abundance numbers were lower than in previous years. My friend set up a "blind" so that he could take close-up photos of various waterfowl, Common Yellowthroat Warblers, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds. It was very exciting (& noisy) to be at the marsh's edge at dawn & in the midst of so many territorial birds striving for dominance. Later on the same day but in the evening, Karen & I looked for birds in the Big Springs area and there were numerous Barn & Violet-green Swallows feeding over the pond. The activity was still frenzied, but now much quieter.

For the "Fitness Birding" outing on the 4th Saturday, I spent 3 nights camping as I joined the Arizona Field Ornithologists (a non-profit organization of serious birders) as we attempted to fill a major bird sighting data gap in AZ (the data gap is deep within the Prescott National Forest). Collectively, we saw ~110 bird species in forest and field habitats including many types of raptors, flycatchers, and warblers. --Rob

Photos below by **Terri Rieser** (left: Red-winged Blackbird; right: Tree Swallow)

**BONUS PHOTOS:**

Below/left: Western Bluebirds, with the female on the left giving a "don't you dare" look to the flustered male (photo by **Ron Pedersen**); below/right: A Sora searches a fresh-water marsh's mud flats and algal mats for food (photo by **Terri Rieser**).

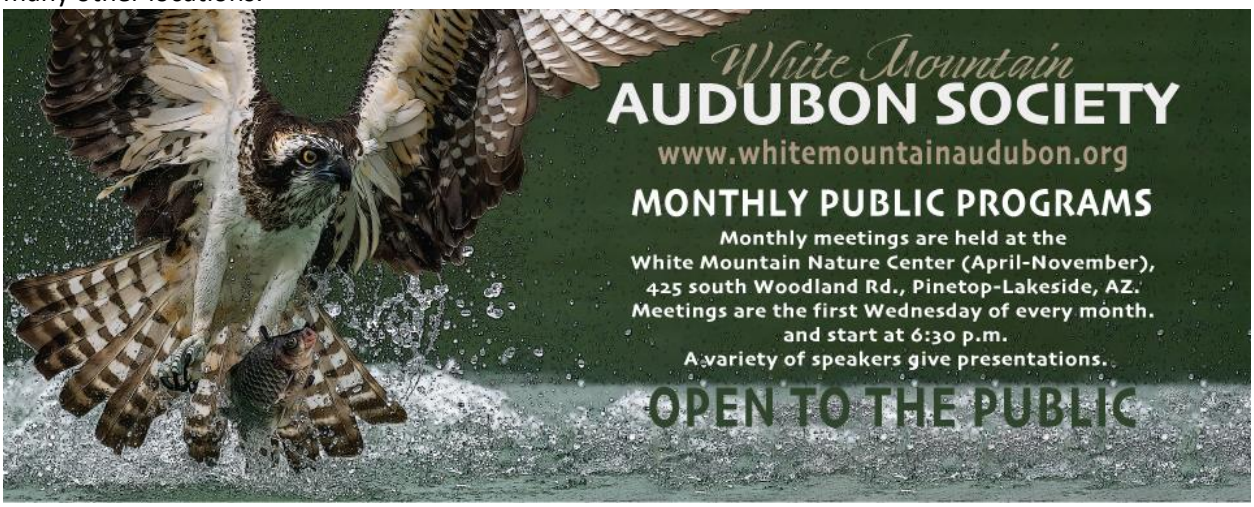
**UPDATES & REMINDERS:**

Have you paid your annual membership dues? Thank you if 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).

See our WMAS 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 _____

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 85935You 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.