



NOVEMBER EDITION 2025 (Enjoy your Thanksgiving Bird!)

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

When I returned from my morning walk along the Rim Road I was slightly disappointed. The hike had been good, but, the birding action had been minimal. Fortunately, when I arrived at my gravel driveway I was met with an unexpected and slightly distant sighting: a **young** Sharp-shinned Hawk. While I do occasionally see **adult** Sharpies perched in the fruit and aspen trees within the fairly wild terrain that constitutes "my property;" they usually only fly in quickly, perch long enough to realize that the thick vegetation (including lilacs, wild-rose, ivy, and pea-vines) is too dense for easy hunting, and move off to more promising hunting grounds. Not only was today's juvenile Sharpie a rare sighting, he was also less worldly than his elders and thought that he might just make a kill somewhere within the tangled under-, middle-, or over-story.

As I walked closer to my front yard, it became obvious that I was not the only one who realized that something was a-foot (er, a-wing). The abundant House Sparrows (aka: English Sparrows) were all a-twitter; and in a way that was more raucous than usual for a mid-autumn day. The sparrows too, had noticed the Sharpie perched in the lower limbs of a hefty Scotch Pine. Although the Sharpie had already noticed me, he nonetheless seemed intently focused on snatching a careless sparrow (which not only included the English Sparrows, but also restless flocks of White-crowned and Chipping Sparrows; all well concealed within the dense mix of sapling aspens and wild-rose).

Suddenly, the Sharpie made his move and swooped toward one chunk of the sparrow-rich thicket, but, just as quickly, he aborted his attack and pulled up and away from the tangled growth and into another tree; this time a young locust. As I maneuvered for a better view, the inexperienced hunter made a second dive toward the brush, but again, came up empty taloned. I watched for another 10 minutes and felt sorry for the hapless, youthful raptor when, after a third botched effort, he finally gave up and flew off in the direction of the Apache lands (a vast wilderness, which would hopefully be better suited to his underdeveloped hunting skills).

I continued to stroll about my yard and took my time watching the birds; which now seemed relieved to have a potentially deadly predator (the Sharpie) replaced by one that they "knew" to be completely non-threatening: me. Before heading indoors to make breakfast, I logged the following additional species right around my house: several subspecies of Dark-eyed Juncos, Pygmy and White-breasted Nuthatches, Mountain Chickadees, Acorn Woodpeckers, Steller's and Western Scrub-jays, Mourning Doves, Lesser Goldfinches, Pine Siskins, House Finches, and a lone Ruby-crowned Kinglet. All of these wonderful birds occurring at a time when much of the southward migration has ended and also without

my providing feeders (I'm not opposed to offering well-maintained feeders; I just don't really see the need for them, given all the natural food that grows in my yard).



Left: An immature "bird-hawk" – it's difficult to be sure whether she is a Sharp-shinned or a Cooper's Hawk, but either way, she is wild and truly free flying. (**Photo by Ron Pedersen**); Right: an adult Sharp-shinned Hawk in dense cover, where hunting experience can pay off. (**Photo by Jon Orona**).

White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2025 Chapter Officers:

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

Note that in 2026 we expect to have one new Board member: Rhonda Forsha (let's welcome Rhonda and thank her for being willing to join the Board!). Also, Mary Williams plans to remain on the Board but step down from her role as President (thank you Mary, for several years of wonderful service in that role!). That will leave us with both the President and VP positions as vacant (the latter has been vacant for nearly a year). Hopefully we will hear from two of you, kind readers, who are willing to step up and fill the vacant spots. Remember, you can at first simply join our Board meetings as an attendee, without any obligation of becoming a Board member, and then decide sometime down the road if you actually want to officially join the Board (either as an Officer Board member or as a non-Officer Board member).



President's Corner by Mary Williams:

Has anyone ever told you 'This would be a good day even if we never see a single bird?' I had that thought on a sunny and very windy October 23 in Apache County. The fall colors were so spectacular that I frequently burst into an Elvis-inspired rendition of "Oh Lord my God, when I'm in awesome wonder, consider all the worlds Thy hands have made...." (I'm especially fond of the second verse with its reference to "lofty mountain grandeur").

Birds? Very few. Migrants are gone and not many wintering waterfowl have returned. I was delighted, however, by a pair of Canada Jays that almost blew across and then landed on the road right in front of my van as I was approaching the Mt Baldy 94 trail parking lot. First sighting of that species for me this year.

My cell phone could not begin to capture the beauty for mile after mile: from the golden oaks east of McNary, to the breath-taking aspens a few thousand feet higher along Highways 260 and 273 thru the White Mountain Apache Reservation and Lee Valley Recreation Area, to the encouraging resurgence of aspen in the Wallow Fire-burned forests and roadsides, to the shimmering willow and ash in the South Fork area of the Little Colorado River, to the glowing cottonwoods at Lyman Lake State Park where I spent the night. You might want to add this drive to your 2026 bucket list.

My friend Bill Toth sent me his close-up view of the gorgeous aspen regeneration on fire-denuded Escudilla Mountain featured below, along with my own distant shot of it across Becker Lake north of Springerville and other photos I took on October 23. He texted that getting up to the high country in October is "very necessary." I agree. Wishing you good birding and many blessings. -Mary



Two views of Mount Escudilla (left by **Bill Toth**; right by **Mary Williams**; see more of Mary's fall color photos elsewhere in this edition of the Newsletter.

White Mountain Audubon Society Calendar etc. (Rob Bettaso):

Our 1st Weds speaker presentations for 2025 have concluded and we hope to resume having speakers give presentations next year. For 2026, we expect that all monthly Audubon programs will continue to start at 6:30 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month. We will presumably have our monthly meetings from May thru Oct. The programs will be free and open to all. Monthly meetings are held at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside.

Jan 3, 2026: the annual **Christmas Bird Count (CBC)** will occur on the 1st Sat of the New Year! Call me (Rob: 928-368-8481) if you're interested in learning more and/or participating.

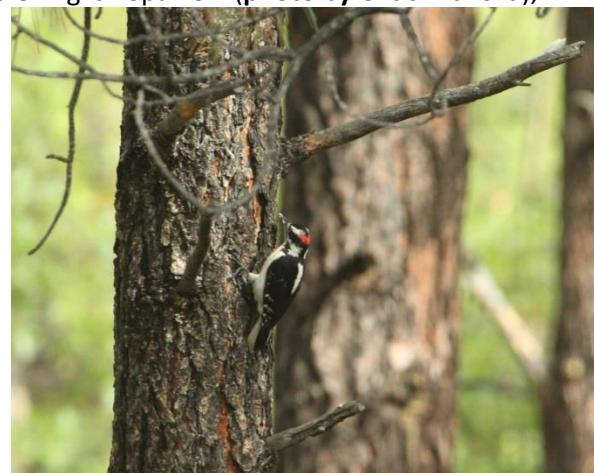
The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trips: Monthly bird watching field trips on the 3rd Sat of every month; usually led by Rob Bettaso but also by Jon Orona when he is available (and if others would like to lead, pls give me a call so we can discuss). If you're interested in attending, feel free to 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 **Nov 15th**. 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 **Nov 22nd**. Feel free to leave me a message if you're interested.

OUR WHITE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY (WMAS) OCT FIELD TRIPS:

Six people joined me on birding walks/hikes this month, which occasionally were as much about gasping at the autumn leaf colors as about the birds. Many (most?) of our warm-season birds have headed south and while some of our winter residents have returned, more are yet to come! Moreover, the brisk morning air adds an element of excitement and anticipation to every outing. Come join us and who knows, maybe we'll find one of our less common winter visitors (Ross's Goose, Ferruginous Hawk, Merlin, Marsh Wren, American Pipit, Harris Sparrow, Chestnut-collared Longspur, etc.).

BONUS PHOTOS:

Clockwise from top/left: A poor Common Poorwill (hit by a car, but not photographer **Jamie Bettaso's** car); an industrious male Hairy Woodpecker (**photo by Ron Pedersen**); a serene male White-crowned Sparrow (**photo by Gaston Porterie**); an ensconced male English Sparrow (**photo by Chuck Lanska**);





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).

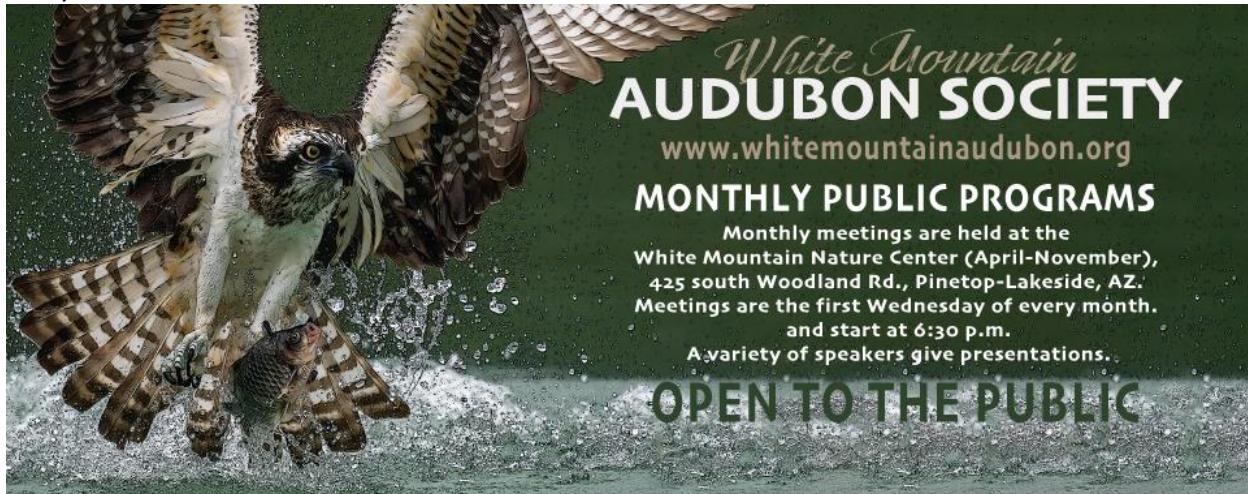
Also, if you are not a member of the National Audubon Society, we encourage all Chapter members to join the national organization. Information on joining the national organization is easy as you only need to type “National Audubon Society” into your internet search engine to obtain the simple instructions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

Below: more of **Mary Williams’s** Fall photos:



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 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.



Fall colors. Photos by Mary Williams.