



## **MAY EDITION 2026 (Count Birds in a Globally Big Way on “Global Big Day”!)**

### **“Out on a Limb” by Rob Bettaso (White Mountain Audubon Board Member):**

One of the many wonderful things about birding is that generally, when you go to a new place, you get to find and see new birds. The further from home you go, the more new birds you will see. Because I had never been to the Neotropics before, when I travelled to Costa Rica (CR) for 10 days of intensive, guided birding, it was almost like I was taking up birding for the first time. This was true not only because CR has so many bird species (over 900), most of which I had never seen before, but also because some of the habitats are so different from ours (tropical hardwoods compared to pine forests, for example) that looking for birds is like learning everything anew from a “How to Bird” beginner’s manual.

Many people perhaps associate the Neotropics with large, gaudy, bizarrely shaped birds, such as toucans, parrots, quetzals, and mot-mots (granted, the latter group is perhaps not a household word in the U.S.). But, believe me, there are also plenty of cryptic, and even drab, birds that thrive on the dimly-lit forest floor and in the understory of the dense, rain-forest environment. Three of the many passerine bird groups (the ant-birds, the creepers, and the ovenbirds) are comprised of hundreds of species, and many of them are basically plumed in various shades of brown.

Additionally, while CR has several endemic species, and many more that are strictly found in both the dry and the wet forms of Neotropical forests, it also has many types of birds that are found elsewhere in the world. To wit: the aforementioned parrots are found world-wide (especially in warmer climates); ant-birds, quetzal, & mot-mots are found throughout Latin America; and the creepers, have one representative right here in the U.S. (the Brown Creeper, which are also found in AZ). When it comes to some of our most colorful U.S. species, the warblers, many of the eastern (and to a lesser extent, western) warblers winter in CR. In fact, CR (and much of Central-America) has “austral migrants” that come to CR for the winter from countries south of the equator; as well as “boreal migrants” that winter in CR but summer well north of the equator (in Mexico, the U.S., & Canada).

If you want to learn more about the birds of CR and my experiences birding there, feel free to check out *Outdoors Southwest* magazine, as I hope to publish two articles (one in the May edition and one in June). Additionally, please feel free to join me for any of my monthly local birding trips, as I would be happy to share thoughts about CR birds – at least when we aren’t busy looking at the beautiful birds of our own wonderful habitats around town.

Lastly, if you want to see a full listing of the birds we saw on our tour of southern CR, then visit the following link to view our eBird “trip report” – which will detail the locations of the 288 species our group saw: <https://ebird.org/tripreport/491536> from March 21-31, 2026.

**PHOTOS:** Please note that **all six** of the new bird photos in this edition of the WMAS Newsletter were taken by **Doug & Rhonda Forsha** (members of our Chapter). Because I didn’t take any bird photos during my 10 days in Costa Rica (I lack the needed telephoto equipment), the Forshas were kind enough to let me use photos they had taken when they visited Ecuador in 2024. All six of the pictures I used from their collection are of *species* of birds that either occur in both Costa Rica and Ecuador (& many other Neotropical countries in Latin America as well) or, at least have a representative of the respective *Family* in each of the two countries.

Left: A Plate-billed Toucan (in Ecuador but with similar species occurring in Costa Rica); Right: A Scarlet Macaw (a species of parrot that is found in both countries). Both toucans and parrots can be quite social and gregarious. Both are also iconic birds of the Neotropics.



**White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2026 Chapter Officers:**

President: Vacant  
Vice President: Vacant  
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

**2026 WMAS Board Members:**

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

**White Mountain Audubon Society Calendar etc.:**

For 2026, we expect that all monthly Audubon speaker programs will continue to happen on the first Wednesday of the month. We will expect to have our monthly meetings from May thru Oct and they will

start at **6pm**. The programs will be free and open to all. Monthly meetings are held at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside.

**May 6, 2026 at 6 p.m.** we will have our first speaker of 2026. **Greg Clark** will discuss his work with Burrowing Owl conservation and relocation efforts. As mentioned above, the presentation will be at the Nature Center.

**May 9, 2026 will be Global Big Day** – a massive, worldwide bird census. Our Chapter will play its part and you can call **Mary Williams (480-235-1792)** if you want to assist in Navajo County or **Ken McByrd-Bell (928-362-9028)** if you want to assist in Apache Co.

**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 (**Rob 928-368-8481**) and leave a message so that I can return your call to give you the details for the upcoming trip.

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

In April, ten of us explored local birding areas that included riparian and upland habitats. It is an exciting time of year with migrants gearing-up as some return to our area to begin their spring nesting activities, while others pass-through on their way further north to nesting grounds in the U.S. and Canada. Among the locally-nesting returnees, we observed Violet-green & Barn Swallows; Yellow-rumped, Grace's & Black-throated Gray Warblers; Ash-throated Flycatchers; Blue-gray Gnatcatchers; Broad-tailed Hummingbirds; W. Tanagers; and then those species that generally over-winter here but become more numerous/noticeable during courtship: Spotted Towhee, Say's Phoebe, Pine Siskin, Lesser Goldfinch, and various species of bluebirds, blackbirds, meadowlarks, and sparrows.

#### **BONUS PHOTOS by Doug and Rhonda Forsha:**

**Below Left:** The Red-headed Barbet (found in both Ecuador & Costa Rica) occurs in both Old World & Neotropical habitats and eats fruits and insects (a few species specialize in termites); **Right:** a species of sylph in Ecuador; though Costa Rica lacks sylph species, it does have another 50+ hummer species!



**Below Left:** A Golden Tanager in Ecuador has ~50 fellow tanager species in Costa Rica; **Right:** a Myiodynastes type of flycatcher in Ecuador (members of the same genus also occur in Costa Rica). Tanagers are a Western Hemisphere Family of birds that eat seeds, fruits, and bugs while flycatchers are the most numerous family of songbirds on Earth and are found worldwide, excluding the polar-regions. Most flycatchers are obligate bug-eaters (duh).



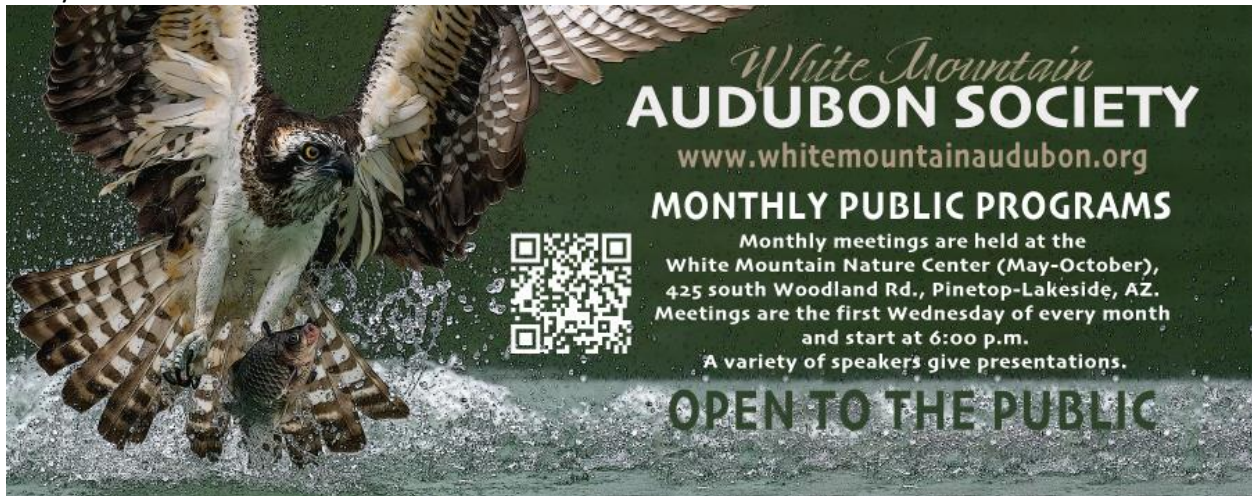
#### **UPDATES & REMINDERS:**

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](http://OutdoorsSW.com) or you can pick-up a hardcopy version at the Nature Center, Safeway, Town Hall, and many other locations.



*White Mountain*  
**AUDUBON SOCIETY**  
[www.whitemountainaudubon.org](http://www.whitemountainaudubon.org)  
**MONTHLY PUBLIC PROGRAMS**  
Monthly meetings are held at the  
White Mountain Nature Center (May-October),  
425 south Woodland Rd., Pinetop-Lakeside, AZ.  
Meetings are the first Wednesday of every month  
and start at 6:00 p.m.  
A variety of speakers give presentations.  
**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**



**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.

**You can also pay by Zelle scanning the QR code below:**

