



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 3, Issue 6

February 2002

FOR THE BIRDS

By Wayne Finke

Last month I prefaced my note on Birding the Agua Fria National Monument with my personal qualms about the word "Birding". I'm one of these weird persons who feel guilty when good things happen to them. Anyway, I posed that "Birding" is a type of takings: you get something for nothing. Fortunately, "Birding" does no harm - generally - as opposed to most forms of takings.

Nevertheless, for pure recreation, for pure pleasure, I go "Birding". I know you do likewise. And I hope that you are taking advantage of all the fine work that our Birding Trips Committee is doing - just for you.

The place/project of the month:

Arcosanti and the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership

Most of you know what and where Arcosanti is. It's Paolo Soleri's dream city on a hill where most human activity is concentrated in a high-density central cluster, leaving the rest of the land for agriculture and nature. It is the antithesis of sprawl. For those of you who haven't been there or seen it, it's the massive castle like structure just east of I-17 at Cortes Junction. Get off at Cortes Junction; turn north at the filling station onto a dirt road, and wind your way to their parking lot. You should go there: they have a small coffee shop with nice sweets, and they have a rather magnificent show room for the display of their trademark bells. Bring money - plenty of it. And try to get the feel of the concept - compact living, with the all-outdoors right outside your front door.

Several of us from the Sonoran Audubon Society have been attending monthly meetings there, since last summer, as part of a nonprofit group called, "The Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership".

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At our next meeting....

February 13

6:30 p.m.

Notice the Time Change



"The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas: A Milestone in Arizona's Ornithological History"

Presented by Troy Corman

Neotropical Migratory Birds Coordinator
Arizona Game & Fish Department

In 1993, Arizona became the 32nd U.S. state to initiate a state-wide breeding bird atlas project. The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas (ABBA) is an 11-year project coordinated by the Arizona Game and Fish Department. It involved nine seasons of fieldwork and will take two to three years to analyze data, and write and publish the Atlas. The overall purpose of the ABBA was to map the current distribution and document the relative abundance and natural history aspects for each of the more than 280 species of birds breeding in Arizona. The project documented 283 species of birds nesting in Arizona during the period, including 11 species never reported prior to the surveys. Two of these were the first nesting records for the U.S. The final product will be a compilation of this information into a book that will be readily available to bird enthusiasts, educators, biologists, researchers and other natural resource managers in Arizona and adjacent states.

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FOR THE BIRDS

Attendees include staff of Arcosanti, local ranchers and business types, National Monument and other Federal Government personnel, University of Arizona staff of various disciplines, and others - including conservation minded members of the Sonoran Audubon Society.

Topics typically on the table include cleaning up the waste dumps in Big Bug Creek, watershed contamination from use of an abandoned mine as a dump site, geological and hydrological mapping of the watershed, and a host more of exciting issues.

The relevancy and the feeling that *my presence counts here*, draws the attendees back month after month. Same for us of SAS. And for us, it's just an extension of our adopted Agua Fria National Monument.

We sweeten the trip there by birding the Arcosanti grounds for a couple hours prior to the meetings. We've identified about 70 birds so far, including the Yellow-billed Cuckoo and Zone-tailed Hawk. Since we've been birding the place since last summer, we have a feel for the year-round bird life.

Of course we had to get permission from Arcosanti to be roaming around their property. They graciously provided that, and even worked with the local ranchers to get us onto their lands.

Then they asked if we could provide them a bird list of the place. They simply want to know what wildlife lives there, and are considering expanding their tourism attractiveness. We said, "Yes, we can do that".

We started with our 70 confirmed birds, and are adding others that should be there reasonably often. We have enlisted Troy Corman of Arizona Game and Fish Department to help us with the "reasonably often" part of the list.

As I write this, we have planned an extensive bird count of Arcosanti and the immediate surrounding area. About a dozen SAS members (mostly those who signed up to help with the forthcoming bird-identification project on the Monument) will split up into teams, much as is done for Christmas Counts, and bird the area for half a day. We just want a better idea of what is there, to make any Arcosanti Bird Brochure more authentic.

Hopefully, one of these days, soon, we will be able to bring copies of "The Birds of Arcosanti", to one of our Regular Meetings, and show off our SAS logo on the bottom of the title page. Hopefully, you will then be able to add Arcosanti to your place of favorite birding places.

Field Trip Report

Thunderbird Paseo

Leader: Eleanor Campbell

Tuesday, January 15

This was a joint trip of Birders' Anonymous and Sonoran Audubon members who met for a walk at Thunderbird Paseo and then on to Thunderbird Park. There was a nice turnout with twenty three birders from both organizations.

The birds seen were:

Pied-billed Grebe, Ruddy Duck, Canada Goose, Ring-necked Duck, Hooded Merganser, Common Merganser, Great Blue Heron, Great Egret, Black-crowned Night Heron, Red-tailed Hawk, American Coot, Greater Yellowlegs, Least Sandpiper, Killdeer, Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, Burrowing Owl, Anna's Hummingbird, Costa's Hummingbird, Belted Kingfisher, Say's Phoebe, Black Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Northern Mockingbird, European Starling, Verdin, House Sparrow, Yellow Warbler, White-crowned Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Vesper Sparrow, Lark Sparrow, Abert's Towhee, Red-winged Blackbird, Western Meadowlark, and Great-tailed Grackle.

What a great day! The beginners saw a number of new birds and were very excited to see them.

The Paradise Bakery and Café and Trader Joe's located in Metro Center donate refreshments for our monthly meetings. When you shop at either the Paradise Bakery and Café or at Trader Joe's please let them know how much we appreciate their donations of their wonderful products.



The refreshment sign and our entrance sign were created and designed by Jak Keyser, one of our very talented members.

A message from your president...

Most of the members who attended our January monthly meeting noticed the time change. We now start at 6:30 PM instead of 7:00 PM. What we didn't announce in the January newsletter was that the first half hour would be a social time with refreshments served. This will be a time to talk to the people who we haven't seen for some time. Previously, we had the refreshments served after the first part of meeting and it was hard to get everyone back in time to start the second half. I hope everyone is happy with the new arrangement.

It always seems that there isn't enough room in the six pages of the newsletter to include all the tidbits of information that I'd like to share with you. One solution is to put the field trip reports in a separate section on the Web Page. The problem with that solution is that not all our members have Internet access. Another solution is to have the newsletter eight pages instead of six. That will be an increased printing cost and I'm not sure that four double side pages will go for the cost of a 34 cent stamp. Any ideas?

Incidentally, the last several field trips have been outstanding.

“The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas: A Milestone in Arizona's Ornithological History”

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Data collected provides an historical perspective ("snapshot" in time) for comparisons with past and future ornithological works. The project also provides a central breeding bird database that is already beginning to be used as a reference tool by land managers and professionals when responding to proposed changes in management. The ABBA used a large volunteer work force of more than 500 and a handful of biologists to collect much of the field information. It allowed birders to combine their avid interest and skills in bird identification with the satisfaction of contributing to an important conservation project.

Troy Corman has been an Arizona resident for more than 20 years. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Wildlife Management from Arizona State University in 1987. He conducted avian and herpetology surveys for the Bureau of Land Management along the upper San Pedro River for nearly 3 years. Troy Corman has been working for the Non-game Branch of the Arizona Game and Fish Department since 1990 where he coordinated the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas project and statewide species specific surveys for threatened and endangered birds.

Christmas Bird Counts Part Two

By Chuck Kangas

In the January issue I wrote an article about Christmas Bird Counts and realized I had more reminiscences than space. In 1974, I was living in Tucson, and I did the Sabino Canyon Christmas Count. I went with Bill Harrison, an extremely good birder who at that time lived in Nogales. Bill has the first U S record for the Plain-capped Starthroat Hummingbird which appeared at his feeder in Nogales. He was one of my early birding mentors. I still remember how excited I was to have two new life birds on that count—a Winter Wren and a Golden-crowned Kinglet. Bill knew both birds by sound. Experienced birders know that the kinglet has a very high pitched call and it usually works the tops of trees. I don't think I would have found either bird without Bill's help. So, Smitty, Bill Harrison and Bob Bradley gave me a lot of help when I first started birding.

Bob Bradley and I went on numerous Christmas Counts throughout the years. We went on many of the Nogales counts when Bill Harrison was the compiler. The Harrison home was open for the participants and most of them slept in sleeping bags on the living room floor. I can remember one of the only Arizona Christmas Counts where it rained most of the day. It was one of those Nogales counts with Bob Bradley. We walked the entire day. We parked our car at the point where we would exit and Bill Harrison drove us to the starting point. I might be getting several of the counts confused, but if I remember correctly, we stepped into a flock of Montezuma Quail and later at the end of the count we saw a adult male Wilson's Warbler. That's always a nice bird to have on a Christmas Count. At the end of the count Bob and I were on either side of a canyon and got separated. We couldn't find each other. We both walked into Nogales and went to the restaurant where the dinner was held. We were both surprised to find out that we each had made it to the dinner. Later, Bill drove us to pick up our car.

Another count that Bob Bradley and I participated in was the Yuma Christmas Count. Dick Robinson was the compiler. In the 1980 count there were a group of us in a vehicle and saw an owl sitting in a tree at the edge of the road directly in front of us. It took all of us a few minutes to figure out what species the owl belonged to—it was a Short-eared Owl. We had many birds throughout the years that hadn't been seen on the Yuma count before. Among them were an American Crow and a White-tailed Kite.

When the Phoenix Christmas Count was in the West Valley, I had the area that included the southern part of Sun City and all of Youngtown.

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Christmas Bird Counts Part Two

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I recruited many Sun City residents who were very familiar with the hummingbirds of that area, including Anna's and Costa's Hummingbirds. Our group turned in numerous Costa's and our compilers at the time, Bix Demaree and Bob Bradley couldn't believe that there were that many Costa's in the area. The next day I took Bob through the alleys of Youngtown where we could look at the numerous hummingbird feeders that were hanging in the back of the houses. After walking down several alleys and after counting about 20 or 30 Costa's hummingbirds it was apparent that the count was correct. We had National highs for that species for the several years that we continued to have the count in that part of the valley.

When I lived in Denver a number of years back, I went on a number of Christmas Bird Counts with Doug Stotz. He was another birder who added a lot to my birding skills. Doug later got a PhD in ornithology from the University of Chicago. He helped me, among numerous other things, to distinguish between Black-capped and Mountain Chickadees and Chestnut-collared and Lapland Longspurs by sound. Doug and I did many Colorado bird counts together. Those of you who know me, know I can no longer do that, because of my hearing loss.

Bob Bradley and I also did many counts throughout Arizona. Besides those mentioned we have done counts in Portal, Ramsey Canyon, Gila River, Patagonia, Atascosa Highlands, Bill Williams Delta, the old Lake Pleasant and Parker counts. We've also done Puerto Peñasco, and Yécora, Sonora, Mexico. Did I leave any out Bob?

I want to reiterate the wonderful time I've had throughout the years doing the Christmas Bird Counts and the many friendships that I've developed. I've also learned a lot about bird identification and have had a lot of help along the way. I hope many of you take part in at least one of them next year. It's a good way to sharpen your birding skills.

Join Sonoran Audubon Society.....

New Adult or Family membership: \$20.00

Seniors and Students: \$15.00

Renewal fee for Students and Seniors: \$15.00

Mailed Newsletter subscription : \$8.00

Membership includes National Audubon magazine and the electronic Chapter Newsletter. Make check payable to National Audubon Society (for newsletter subscription, make check payable to Sonoran Audubon Society). Include address, email and telephone number. Mail to:

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Scrub Jay

Photo by Pat Dickey

One of our members, Pat Dickey, has a home in Sun City and a summer home in Prescott. She recently bought a digital camera and took it with her to Prescott. She feeds the Scrub Jays peanuts when she arrives in Prescott and the jays somehow seem to know when she arrives. They come to her patio and beg for food. This time she not only gave them peanuts but unknown to the jays she snapped a picture of one of the more aggressive ones that came right up to her.

Field Trip Report

**Friday, January 18 to Monday January 21,
Bosque del Apache, Socorro, New Mexico.**

Leader: Bob Bradley

When Daniela Yellan asked me to lead this trip, she found the right combination to lure me from my new Colorado abode. It was one of my favorite places, and I had the chance to mingle with old friends.

E-mail postings told of several interesting sightings that needed to be checked out. They included the 3 rosy finch species on the Sandia Crest E. of Albuquerque, a first winter Thayer's Gull, with Herring Gulls, apparently alternating between "the Bosque" and the Socorro dump and reports of Tundra Swan, Am. Bittern, Merlin, and E. Phoebe at "the Bosque". At Water Canyon East of Socorro Blue Jay and Lewis' Woodpecker had been reported. Scouting before the trip produced the rosy finches. The others would have to wait to be discovered by the group.

Seven of us met Friday PM. for dinner and to plan the weekend. There were Chuck and Phyllis Kangas, Darnell Kirksey, Bob and Linda Russman, and visiting from New York, Beverly Wasserman. The 2+ hour trip to the Sandia Crest was nixed because of distance. The refuge was planned for Sat. with Socorro environs and Water Canyon for Sun.

The sudden clamor of Snow (and Ross') Geese at the Flight Deck on "the Bosque" before sunup started things off. Was that a Peregrine that had flown into that snag in the middle of the pond? We could not be sure because of the darkness. Sandhill Cranes were beginning to assemble. Waterfowl included both Hooded as well as Common Mergansers. Neotropical Cormorants seemed to outnumber the Double-crested. Up to six Bald Eagles could be seen at one time. An immature Golden Eagle was spotted and then an Eastern Phoebe. A walk along the Marsh Trail produced Virginia Rail, and unexpectedly, a Sage Sparrow which isn't usually expected in the reeds.

No gulls were found at the Socorro Dump on Sunday, and only Ring-bills were seen the day before at the refuge. The New Mexico Tech campus in Socorro was quite productive. Three wintering White-winged Doves were huddled close together, and a small flock of Cedar Waxwings was spotted. After lunch in Magdalena the trip was completed in Water Canyon where several species were added to the list. Notable were several Acorn Woodpeckers, Juniper Titmouse, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Chickadees and several Brown Creepers. The final tally was 75 species, and I'm ready to go again!

Feb 2002 Field Trips

**Sonoran Audubon strongly encourages
carpooling on all outings!**

Please organize your own carpool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places, and/or contact leaders for carpooling assistance.

Field Trips are rated in difficulty levels one, the easiest, to five, the most difficult. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers at an agreed rate.

REMINDERS: Don't forget water, sunscreen, hats and insect repellent. Wear neutral colors. Avoid bright colors. Wear sturdy walking shoes.

February 15-18

Salton Sea area in Southern California.

Leader: Chuck Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

A haven for wintering birds, this trip should yield numerous species, including ducks, herons, various shorebirds, gulls, white pelicans and other species. Call Chuck for specifics—motel etc.

Thursday, February 21

Le Conte Thrasher and Arlington Areas

Leader: Andree Tarby 480-948-1074

This is the time of year to look for this often illusive Le Conte as well as the Sage and Crissal thrashers. This area will also yield a number of raptors and sparrows. Difficulty: 1 Call leader for meeting time and place.

Wednesday, February 27 Hassayampa

Leader: George Wall 623-875-7057

wallaby@worldnet.att.net

Enjoy a wonder outing at this outstanding Nature Conservancy Preserve near Wickenburg. Several new trails have been added recently. This location always yields numerous species of birds, often including a surprise or two. Bring lunch. Difficulty 2. Meet at the preserve center at 8 AM.

Save these dates

April 26-April 29 Kino Bay, Sonora Mexico

Leader: Ken Bielek 602-279-0134

Spend a relaxing weekend on the beach. This trip will include land birding as well as a pelagic trip. As a special activity we will have the opportunity to visit the Seri Indians to trade for and purchase their special crafts, such as ironwood carvings and baskets. Space is very limited and a deposit will be required. Call leader for more details and to reserve your space.

Calendar of Monthly Meetings...

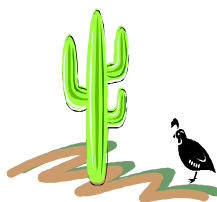
**Location: Auditorium, Glendale Public Library, 5959 West Brown Street
(one block south of Peoria Ave. & 59th Ave. intersection)**

Time: 6:30 p.m.

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Feb 13, 2002 | Troy Corman, Neotropical Migratory Birds Coordinator at AZGFD on "The Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas What We Discovered and Where We Go From Here" |
| Mar 13, 2002 | Karen Schedler, with the AZGFD Education Department on "The Bats of Arizona" |
| Apr 10, 2002 | Fiona Goodson, Environmental Consultant on "Cactus Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl" |
| May 8, 2002 | Kate Litteral of the Mesa Southwest Museum on "Arizona Dinosaurs A to Z" |

Other Dates of Interest:

Feb 6, 6:45 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library. All SAS members welcome. (contact John Delventhal)



Sonoran Audubon Society

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