

# Black Hawk Watch

Newsletter of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society

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## Mexican Spotted Owl

At the January meetings, Joseph Ganey, a Research Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Forest Service, will present a program on conservation planning for the Mexican Spotted Owl. Due to its status as a threatened species, most of us are familiar with this southwestern owl, but perhaps don't know a great deal about its natural history or the conservation issues surrounding it.

Mexican spotted owls live in forested canyon and mountain habitats across the southwest and into Mexico, and prefer closed-canopy forests or rocky canyons for nesting and roosting. Since these forests often contain mature or old-growth stands, forest management practices greatly affect the status of this owl.

Dr. Ganey's talk will cover the basic natural history and ecology of Mexican spotted owls, as well as conservation (or recovery) planning for the owl, and the implications of that effort for forest management in the southwestern U.S. The presentation will not be technical, and does not assume detailed prior knowledge on the topic.

*Joseph Ganey is a Research Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Forest Service. He is also a Rocky Mountain Research Station Member, and on the*

*picture of Mexican Spotted Owl by Diane Knudson, USFW*



*please see Owl, page 3*

## Yellow-billed Cuckoos in AZ

In February Matthew Johnson will discuss the natural history, population status and distribution of the Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Arizona. The Yellow-billed Cuckoo is also called the Raincrow or Stormcrow because its call heralds the coming of summer rains. This habit, combined with its beauty and ability to eat enormous quantities of defoliating caterpillars, has made the Yellow-billed cuckoo a popular bird in North America. Unlike European cuckoos, it rarely lays its eggs in the nests of other birds.

Occupying riparian habitat that is more imperiled with each passing year, it has been recommended for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act by a broad array of scientists. It is a neo-tropical migrant which winters in South America, and before its precipitous decline, it summered and bred in most of the United States, southernmost Canada, and northern Mexico. Its only remaining strongholds in the western U.S. are three small populations in California, and scattered populations in Arizona and New Mexico.

*Matthew Johnson, a Wildlife Biologist at USGS, Southwest Biological Science Center, Colorado*

*please see Cuckoo, page 3*

### January & February Meetings

#### "Mexican Spotted Owl"

Joseph Ganey

**Sedona - January 21 (Wed)**

Adult Community Center  
2645 Melody Ln (behind the Sedona Car Wash)

**Flagstaff - January 22 (Thurs)**

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
1601 N San Francisco St

*Meetings start at 7:00 pm with social time. Formal meeting begins at 7:30pm.*

#### "Yellow-Billed Cuckoo in Arizona"

Matthew Johnson

**Sedona - February 18 (Wed)**

Adult Community Center  
2645 Melody Ln (behind the Sedona Car Wash)

**Flagstaff - February 19 (Thurs)**

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church  
1601 N San Francisco St



## President's Corner

*Phyllis Kegley, President*

### More About Our Dedicated Volunteers

In my last column I wrote about some of the volunteers who have given so much time and effort to making Northern Arizona Audubon Society a viable chapter of the National Audubon Society. Here are some more.

Herb Henderson, our immediate past president, was an energetic and visionary leader. In his two year term as president, he helped us get organized in a way that has certainly made my job easier. It was his idea to have committee co-chairs, one for the Flagstaff area and one from the Sedona/Verde Valley. He also has been active in promoting the Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival. Herb is now a Board member of Audubon Arizona, our state office.

Board member, Michael Durgain, has represented us on the nature festival committee since its conception, helping with its phenomenal success. Education chair, Joan Hamilton and Board members Linda Raymond and Patty Denison have been in charge of our chapter booth at the festival each year.

Joan, our Education Co-Chair below the Rim, does so much for our chapter that it would take the whole newsletter to tell you about. She has been in charge of our education activities for many years, contacting elementary teachers in Northern Arizona to sign them up for the Audubon Adventures curriculum for their classrooms. She also handles the scholarships to teachers for environmental education summer camps and is in charge of our chapter booth at Verde Valley Days.

Joan now has help from Marcia Lamkin, co-chair above the Rim, who contacts teachers in the Flagstaff area and the Hopi and Navajo Reservation schools. Marcia has been working through Habitat Harmony to relocate many of the Gunnison prairie dogs that have been displaced by new athletic fields and now the mall expansion. Her conservation ideals make her the right person to expand our educational activities.

We have always had good programs for our monthly meetings, but the last two years,

under the chairmanship of Sue Ordway, have been especially good. If you have attended the last two meetings, one on California condors, and the other on jaguars and wolves, then you know what I am talking about. Check out the calendar insert to see what Sue has arranged for the new year.

Our Field Trip Co-chairs, Barbara Hirt (below the Rim) and Jodi Griffith (above the Rim), work really hard to provide us with knowledgeable leaders and birdy places to go. It takes a lot of organizing to make these happen and we are grateful for the time and effort they give to providing us two to four trips per month.

One of the most important aspects of our Chapter's mission is the conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems. We are so fortunate to have two active and knowledgeable conservation co-chairs, Roger Radd (below the Rim), and Peter Friederici (above the Rim). Roger, who also is the chapter web master, can always be relied on to know the latest on conservation issues in the Verde Valley. His latest conservation venture has been working with Arizona Game and Fish to restore overgrazed areas adjacent to the Page Springs Fish Hatchery. Linda, Patty, and Joan have worked with him on this important task. Thanks to the hard work of these folks, this area is now designated an Important Bird Area. Linda is planning more plantings in January. See the calendar insert for the date.

We are so pleased to have Peter as Conservation Co-Chair in the Flagstaff area. He is knowledgeable about forest restoration and many other issues that need action. Peter organized the Chapter Conservation Hotline and the wonderful program on the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge at NAU last year. If you would like to be included on the Hotline list serve, please give Peter a call.

Well, I have not done justice to any of these Board members and volunteers and I haven't mentioned all the Board members yet, so I will have to continue in the Mar./April issue. Until then, happy birding and please think about volunteering on one of our committees.



## Montezuma Well

Sunday, January 11 - Barbara Hirt, leader

**M**eet in the picnic area where we will bird before going to the Well to check on the wintering ducks. We will have scopes for close-up viewing of the ducks. Possibilities: Hermit Thrush, Song Sparrow, Pied-billed Grebe, Gadwall, American Wigeon. Contact Barbara at 928.284.3367

*Owl, from page 1*

*Mexican spotted owl recovery team. He has a B.S. in Wildlife Management from Humboldt State University, and an MS in Biology and Ph.D in Zoology from Northern Arizona University.*

*Cuckoo, from page 1*

*Plateau Field Station, has 12 years of experience studying avian populations and behavior. He is co-author of the Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo Natural History Summary and Survey Methodology. His recent work has concentrated on studies of bird populations on the Colorado Plateau and in the adjacent southwestern U.S.*

## Regional Trips

### Bosque del Apache

February 13-16 - Frank Brandt, leader

**N**ow is the time to sign up for the NAAS trip to Bosque del Apache on Valentine's-President's Day weekend. This National Wildlife Refuge on the Rio Grande 20 miles south of Socorro, N.M. features clamorous flyouts of snow geese and sandhill cranes. Trip leader Frank Brandt scouted the refuge in December and saw these flocks and 60 other species, including a merlin, greater yellowlegs, white-throated sparrow, and a rough-legged hawk hovering in the wind along US 60 near Quemado.

The plan is to carpool leaving on Friday, February 13 or Saturday if that suits your schedule better and return on Monday. The drive from Flagstaff is six and a half to seven hours and very scenic if you go via US 60 past the VLA (Very Large Array) telescope. Frank made arrangements with the Friends of the Bosque for guided birding tours of the refuge on Saturday and Sunday. The recommended motel in Socorro is

## Dead Horse Ranch State Park

Saturday, January 24 - Wilma Morrison, leader

**W**e hope to see Yellow-rumped Warbler, Western Meadowlark, and maybe some surprises hanging around. Call Wilma at 928.282.7776 for time and meeting location.

## Bull Pen Ranch

Saturday, February 28 - Ted Fritzinger, leader

**M**eet at 8:00 AM at the McDonalds in Camp Verde (I-17 & SR 260). We will carpool from there. Call Ted at 928.567.7402 with questions.

*Song Sparrow  
art by Gary Romig*



## Be a Regional Trip Leader!

We are looking for a volunteer to coordinate a regional trip to the Audubon Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch in southern Arizona and surrounding areas such as Sonoita next year. We have contact information for lodging & field trip leaders but need someone to organize the trip. Please call Barbara Hirt at 928-284-3367 to volunteer or for further information.

the Econo Lodge, (505) 835-1500. Make reservations by mid January for best price and choice of rooms. About a dozen members have expressed interest in going, but there is room still for you!

Because NAAS has costs on a trip like this, such as liability insurance, we will ask for a \$25 donation from each participant. This will be waived for students or anyone for whom this donation makes the trip unaffordable.

Contact Frank Brandt before Jan 10, 779-3855 or kfbrandt@aol.com. After then, he'll be chasing birds in Ecuador until the 28th. In the interim, contact Jodi Griffith, 556-0097 or jgriffith@MNA.mus.az.us. We'll send you more detailed instructions on travel and activities at the refuge.



### Rio de Flag Bottoms on Townsend-Winona Rd.

Sunday, October 26 - Zackery Zdinak, leader

Nine participants showed up for a pleasant morning stroll with trip leader Zackery Zdinak along the cattails and pinyon-juniper. Twenty five species of birds were identified, most by sight, some by calls. Lots of sparrows, as well as bluebirds, robins, and solitaires. Scrub and Pinyon Jays made appearance. Highlights included a Ferruginous Hawk, Lincoln's Sparrow and entertaining Juniper Titmice.

### Flagstaff Lakes and Wetlands

Sunday, November 23 - Curt Fultz, leader

The field trip to "wetlands of the area" had eleven more duck species than people--- 13 to two. The temperature rose from five degrees to a balmy 30 by early afternoon. Nothing very unusual was seen, though ducks were particularly well represented, including Wigeon, Ruddy, Ring-necked, Lesser Scaup, Mallard, Gadwall, Canvasback, Bufflehead, Red-head, Green-winged Teal, Pintail, Shoveler, and Common Merganser. Also tallied were Western and Eared Grebe, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, and a flocks of Pinyon Jays.

### Page Springs Fish Hatchery

Saturday, November 15 - Patti Denison, leader

When scheduling the hike for November 15th, I forgot to take into account the lack of daylight at this time of year. In spite of a dark beginning, seven hearty Audubon members arrived at the PSFH Bubbling Ponds for a walk around the new trail at 7:00 a.m. With PSFH bird lists in hand, we headed out into the mist of the ponds. There were a few sparrows foraging around the ponds, as well as an American Pipit. We heard the call of the Virginia Rail from the back ponds but never got a look at it. The first bench provided a great photo op where Marge Schaeffer, Wilma Morrison and Betty Girvin tried out the comfort of the first seat provided by AZGF. While Marge stayed put to keep an eye on the ponds the rest of us made our way through the mesquite bosque where we found Bushtits, RC Kinglets and Abert's Towhees. Jed Fulkerson, Wilma and Betty left us at the Cottonwood plantings while the remainder finished the tour.

Linda Raymond commented that it appeared there was about a 30% survival rate for the Cottonwoods Audubon planted after another hot dry summer. When we arrived back at the ponds we witnessed an "unknown" drop beneath the cording protecting the fish ponds where this small duck began diving for breakfast. Barbara Hirt, Michael Cain, Linda Raymond and I took turns on the scope and with the aid of Sibley's we began the process of elimination. Michael called out that, "it has a frog"! After several minutes the bird somehow managed to flip it into it's mouth. With legs protruding from the bill, we continued an attempt to identify. We have since agreed that it was a female Hooded Merganser, a species which has not been recorded there since Virginia Gilmore spied one in 1991. It is a lovely time of year to walk the trail, take a picnic and enjoy the benches provided along the way.

*Thanks to all these people who renewed/joined NAAS!*  
*Frank and Linda Brandt*  
*Ben and Pat Brown*  
*Suzy Clemenz*  
*Patricia Denison*  
*Susanne Durling*  
*June M. Kaiser*  
*Jim Logan and Sherry Lewis*  
*Betty J. Martin*  
*Nancy Ryder*  
*Philip Walker*

### ***Wanted!***

### **Volunteers at Page Springs Fish Hatchery**

Do you like the outdoors and want to make a positive contribution to wildlife habitat? NAAS needs volunteers to help with tree planting, exotic plant eradication, and trail maintenance at the Page Springs Fish Hatchery. We'll be working on Jan 10th and 17th from 9am to 3pm. We may also have a work day in February. Bring work gloves, shovels and rakes if you have them, lunch, water and sunscreen. We'll meet at 9am at the Bubbling Ponds side of the hatchery at the new parking lot on Page Springs Road. Call Linda Raymond 928-282-6188 (lraym@sedona.net) for more information and to let us know that you'll be there.



## BACKYARD HABITATS ARE IMPORTANT TO BIRDS

The Great Backyard Bird Count (February 13-16) has two main purposes. One is to “track the abundance and distribution of North America’s winter birds”. The other is to call attention to the important and enormous habitat that bird-friendly backyards provide birds and other species of animals.

One of the largest citizen science projects in the world, participants across North America submitted almost 50,000 checklists totaling more than four million birds of 512 species during last year’s count. The data collected will help to document trends in bird populations during the winter months when birds face many environmental hurdles. Comparisons with previous counts can indicate which bird species are declining. Scientists can then do further research to try to find reasons for the declines and determine what interventions may be necessary.

“The Great Backyard Bird Count is a terrific way for individuals, families, schools, and community groups to contribute to a better understanding of birds”, says Frank Gill, National Audubon’s Director of Science.

Also, it calls attention on the best ways to improve the health and increase the diversity of one’s backyard with native plants, water and other wildlife-friendly elements. This includes

reducing pesticide use, conserving water, planting native species and removing exotic pests.

If you or a group that you belong to would like to participate, all you need is basic knowledge of bird identification and access to the Internet at home, a friend’s house, local library, school, or anywhere you can get access to the web.

Follow these steps:

**Count the birds in your backyard,** local park, or other natural area on one or all four count days. You can count in as many different locations as you wish; just make sure to keep separate records and fill out a checklist for each area.

**Watch the birds** for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a half-hour or more, so that you’ll have a good sense of what birds are in your area.

### **How to count:**

Your data will be used by scientists to analyze bird populations, so it is very important that everyone count their birds in exactly the same way. On the day(s) that you count, watch your bird feeders, or take a short walk (less than 1 mile) in your neighborhood or park.

For each kind (species) of bird

that you see, keep track of the **highest number of individuals** that you observe at any one time. Use a “Tally Sheet” to help keep track of your counts. Be careful not to count the same bird over and over! Don’t add another Blue Jay to your tally every time you see a Blue Jay at the feeder. *You could be seeing the same individual again and again.* If you record only the highest number of individual birds that you see in view at one time, you’re sure to never count the same bird more than once!

At the end of the day go to “**Submit your bird checklist**” on our GBBC web site, [www.birdsource.org/gbbc](http://www.birdsource.org/gbbc). Fill out the questions about your location, local habitat, and count duration. Then enter your high counts for each species sited on that day and location. You can submit one bird checklist for each day that you count or for each *new* area that you count in.

**Finally**, after you’ve submitted your data, explore our web site. Check our results section to see other reports from your community, and watch as data comes in from other areas. Have a look through our other pages, and find out other ways you can help birds.

The Great Backyard Bird Count is a project developed and managed by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology with sponsorship from Wild Birds Unlimited store owners and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a division of the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture.



*Gila Woodpecker*  
art by Gary Romig



*White-crowned Sparrow*  
art by Gary Romig



## PROJECT FEEDERWATCH COULD USE YOUR HELP... - by Peter Friederici

Last winter was a season of extremes for bird populations. In West Nile virus-afflicted regions, counts of American Crows dropped to a 15-year low. Chickadees also were seen in fewer numbers than usual, while other species appeared in record-high numbers. How do researchers know this? Because more than 16,000 people from across the United States and Canada count the birds that visit their feeders and send this information to scientists at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, where it is collated and analyzed to determine the status of North America's feeder birds. This winter, won't you join them?

The observers are volunteers for Project FeederWatch, a winter-long survey of North American birds that visit backyard bird feeders. FeederWatch, which began in 1987, is organized by Cornell and Bird Studies Canada.

"FeederWatchers" represent a range of ages and backgrounds, but all of them share a passion and concern for birds. They follow a simple protocol that was designed by scientists and educators. The protocol asks participants to choose count days, record how many birds of each species they see, and note details about weather conditions. Then they send this information to scientists at Cornell via the Internet or paper data forms. "Thanks to the careful reports of these dedicated volunteers, we've been able to

make some interesting observations concerning the whereabouts of birds across the continent," says David Bonter, project leader for Project FeederWatch.

Bonter says FeederWatch has been able to track such trends as the movement of disease in House Finches, winter irruptions of such species as Evening Grosbeaks, and changes in abundance of Cooper's and Sharp-shinned Hawks. "It's truly amazing what we've learned from the remarkable dataset provided by Project FeederWatch," he says. "And to think that it exists solely because so many people are willing to take a little time to tell us which birds are visiting their bird feeders through the winter makes it more remarkable still. We are truly grateful for their help."

The more volunteers submitting bird counts to Project FeederWatch, the more scientists can learn about feeder bird populations. Participants receive a Research Kit that includes bird-feeding tips, an identification poster of common feeder birds, a bird-counting days calendar featuring photos taken by FeederWatchers, and more. It's a worthwhile winter project -- and lots of fun. A \$15 fee helps defray the cost of operating the study. To learn more, including how you can become a member, call (800) 843-2473 or visit [www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/pfw).

## BUY SHADE GROWN COFFEE; HELP THE RAIN FORESTS - by Phyllis Kegley

We all receive hundreds of solicitations asking us to support the efforts of the many conservation groups, while not always certain how much our money really helps. Here's a way to help the environment directly by buying shade-grown coffee.

Coffee was traditionally grown under a canopy of shade trees with other types of vegetation. Grown this way, coffee is an environmentally-friendly crop. The shade trees fix nitrogen in soil and the fallen leaves also provide nutrients, reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.

Recently, many coffee growers in northern Latin America have reduced or eliminated shade to grow new high-yielding coffee plants under direct sun. By using new varieties that can survive open sun, growers hoped to reduce the

onset of leaf rust. Unfortunately, this new agricultural method is more dependent on chemicals and has encouraged the clearing of more rain forest - habitat that supports birds and many other species.

Shade grown coffee is usually more expensive than the open sun brands but much stronger so one has to use only half as much to get the desired flavor. People who have tried it say its flavor is better and even the coffee industry is willing to admit that the new high-yield open sun varieties "are simply not as good in the cup." Climate significantly affects coffee flavor so it stands to reason that plants grown in the shade produce fewer berries which "tend to be sweet and of high quality."

*please see page 7*



### **Shade Grown Coffee**, from page 6

In researching web sites for this article, I was reminded of another aspect of the organic/shade-grown coffee movement: helping the local people whose lives depend on this crop. One example of this is the Organic Coffee Co., a division of JBR Gourmet Foods. At the Finca Irlanda coffee plantation in Chiapas, Mexico, JBR has established a nonprofit foundation to provide additional economic and educational opportunities for coffee farm workers and to protect its natural resources, including rain forest and endangered wildlife. As part of its commitment to protect the environment, JBR encourages "green" growing and processing practices and supplies both organic and "fair trade" certified coffee. JBR also pays special attention to the use of organic fertilizer and the quality and conservation of water and natural habitat preservation. Because not all coffee sold under the label, Organic Coffee Co., is shade-grown, they cannot advertise it as such. (This is the organic coffee that Basha's Supermarkets sells and although it is not all shade-grown, JBR's practices are helping the environment and the farm workers.)

We hope you will support the movement to return coffee growing to the shade (*see list at right*). I am happy to see that more local supermarkets and coffee shops now carry this coffee. If you are in a coffee shop or grocery that does not offer it, ask for shade-grown or organic coffee anyway. If enough people do this, it can influence more businesses to sell it.

### **Where to buy shade-grown/organic coffee:**

#### **Flagstaff:**

- Macy's, 14 S. Beaver
- Campus Coffee Bean, 1800 S. Milton
- Helen Yard's Toucanet Coffee; 779-1865 ([helentoucanet@npgcable.com](mailto:helentoucanet@npgcable.com))
- Basha's Supermarkets, 1000 N. Humphrey's and 2700 S. Woodlands Village Blvd, Organic Coffee Co. brand\*,
- Federated Community Church (Contact: Tish Bogan-Ozmun at 526-3212)
- New Frontiers, 1000 S. Milton Rd. Cafe Ibis -Look for stickers on the packages of shade grown varieties by the Smithsonian Migratory Bird Council
- Safeway, 4910 N. Hwy 89 only, Seattle's Best (Be sure the package is labeled shade-grown)
- Mountain Harvest - Kalani Organica
- Jitter's-Has some but you need to ask for it because it is not labeled.
- Starbuck's-one decaffeinated brand, Shade-grown Mexico
- Late-for-the-Train-Some is labeled shade-grown

#### **Sedona**

- Basha's-160 Coffee Pot Dr., same as Flagstaff
- New Frontiers, 1420 W. Hwy. 89A, same as Flagstaff
- Ravenheart of Sedona, 1370 W. Hwy. 89A - All their coffees are all natural, chemical free and shade grown. They don't pay for the organic certification label though. Check out [povertybay.com](http://povertybay.com)
- Safeway-2300 W. 89A, same as Flagstaff

#### **Cottonwood**

- Safeway-1635 E. Cottonwood St., same as Flagstaff

\*Not entirely shade-grown

### **Make Your Own Suet**

1. Start with slabs of animal fat, which you can obtain from your butcher.
2. Melt the fat in a pot over low heat until melted.
3. Strain the liquid fat through a sieve; throw away any solid chunks.
4. Before the fat congeals, add your choice of bird seed, nuts, or dried fruit. You can also add peanut butter.
5. Once the suet is mixed, spoon into muffin tins and set in the refrigerator to cool.
6. Once the suet has hardened, wrap individually

in waxed paper and then store the suet cakes in a plastic bag in the freezer.

7. When it is time to feed the suet, you can either slip the suet cake into an onion bag, spread the suet onto a pine cone, or slip it into a suet basket.
8. Suet is best fed in the winter. If you feed it in the summer, place in a cool location and check often. If the suet becomes rancid, throw it away.

*Suet is a high energy food that helps birds survive in cold weather. This is one of many different recipes. You can buy a suet holder, or you can put it in a mesh bag. Make sure you hang it high enough that animals don't get at the suet.*



**BLACKHAWK WATCH**  
 Northern Arizona Audubon Society  
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 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(If you wish to be a part of the NAAS email list)*

*Enclosed:*

\_\_\_\_\_ \$12 for 1 year  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$22 for 2 years  
 \_\_\_\_\_ \$30 for 3 years

*Please make checks payable to NAAS and mail to:*  
 Membership Chair, NAAS  
 PO Box 1496, Sedona, AZ 86339

## *Shop at Bashas and Help NAAS!*

If you haven't done so already, make sure you let Bashas know you want to support Northern Arizona Audubon. Bashas' "Thanks a Million" program in which it encourages customers to designate a local non-profit to receive 1% of that customer's purchases will continue through May. Just give the cashier the NAAS number **28834** the next time you check out at Bashas', and thereafter NAAS will automatically receive a 1% skim from subsequent purchases. Encourage your friends to do so as well!

- The **BlackHawk Watch** is published bi-monthly September through June, and is sent to members of the **Northern Arizona Audubon Society** as a membership benefit.
- Articles are welcome from members and non-members. Send proposed articles by email to [bryan@coopsmaps.com](mailto:bryan@coopsmaps.com) Deadline for copy is the 10th of the month.