



SEPTEMBER EDITION 2021

Out on a Limb by Rob Bettaso (WMAS Field Trips Leader & Newsletter Editor)

It's late August, late in the day, and I'm standing on a spit of land on the south side of Rainbow Lake. I often greet the day here and just about as often bid it good night. This is an easy thing to do, as my house is only a 15 minute walk from this little peninsula of gravel and rock. This evening, both barn and violet-green swallows are catching bugs overhead and a great blue heron is trying to figure out the best way to swallow a rather large bullhead.

Waterfowl, mostly mallards and Canada geese, are spread around the lake's surface and a few are loafing about on shore. It won't be long before they are joined by many different species of waterfowl that have summered up north but will winter here. It is comforting to know that while we will say good-bye to many songbirds as they head south for the cold season, we will see an increase in waterfowl. This increase will come both in the form of species diversity and in terms of the number of individuals within a species.

Our little Audubon group is growing in numbers too. This is a welcomed trend and I suspect that over the past 34 years, since the Chapters founding, that it has seen periods of growth and periods of reduction. This is perhaps typical of small town non-profit organizations. I'm not sure the same can be said about our Chapter's diversity. While we have done very well in having relatively equal representation of women and men, we have not done as well in terms of other demographic measures.

Perhaps the most noticeable aspect of our Chapter's membership over the 6+ years that I have been on the Board is that we are not attracting a significant number of new members under the age of 50. As a senior citizen, I am grateful to be a part of a Chapter that is so well suited to the needs and attributes of an older generation: we are mostly retired, so we have a well-earned amount of free time to devote to community activities; we are energetic, so we thrive on early morning bird-watching outings; we are creative, so we have many different ways of expressing our appreciation of birds and birding; and maybe, just maybe, we are a bit more wise at this stage of life, and realize that time spent in Nature is among the most wonderful ways anyone (young or old) can spend our most precious resource – time!

But, we do need to recruit younger members into our Chapter so that, big or small, our membership can be a vital part of the community for countless generations to come. Let's all work together to invite new folks into the fold; and let's try to make sure that many of these new participants are in their teens, 20s, 30s, and 40s. They will be the future of our Chapter and will help our community to maintain a high quality environment in which birds (and indeed, the entire natural world) can not only persist, but prosper.

To this end, let me once again invite a younger person to replace me in my role as Field Trips Leader. Don't get me wrong, I very much enjoy leading our monthly birding field trips, but, in order to welcome younger folks into the Chapter, I do think the Field Trips Leader role is one that is ideally suited to an enthusiastic birder who is under the age of... well, let's just say someone who is significantly younger than me, and I'm 64.

White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2021 Chapter Officers:

President: Mary Williams	480-235-1792
Vice-President: Tom Jernigan	928-532-1510
Secretary: Liz Jernigan	928-532-1511
Treasurer: Tom Jernigan	928-532-1510
Field Trips: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Newsletter: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Publicity: Mary Freemon	928-205-8597
Webmaster: Alan Vickers	

Board Members:

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Joan Patrick, Mary Freemon, Rob Bettaso, Mary-Ellen Bittorf, Susie Walker.

President's Corner:

Greetings Birders: What a difference a few weeks have made for the White Mountains! Thankfully, we no longer need to be concerned about local drought and fires. (Now beware of mud and floods!) As flowers bloom, seeds ripen and insects swarm before freezing temps arrive, our resident and migratory birds are happy, busy, and fun to watch. Hope you too are enjoying them and can take advantage of some of the things that your local Audubon chapter offers for you to learn more about birds and birding.

The *Birding the White Mountains* classes that started in May have – and will – continue on the last Fridays of June, July, August 27, September 24. About 50 people have attended so far, many more than once. Each class focuses on species that might be seen on the optional bird walks the next morning. We have ventured to easily accessible birding hotspots – Pintail Lake, White Mountain Nature Center, Rainbow Lake, Jacques Marsh, Scott's Reservoir. A photo of our July Rainbow Lake birders is attached.

Our focus on September 24 will be on species most often seen at higher elevations and we plan to head up to Apache County on Saturday morning. I'll spend the night in the PTLS Town Hall parking lot and anyone who wishes to join us can follow me from there at 6:30 AM. We will choose stops and strolls at places with ample parking near the Mt. Baldy trailheads as well as in Greer for a day of birding. I'll camp out Saturday night at either the Winn Campground in the Lee Valley Recreation Area or at the Benny Creek Campground in Greer. Perhaps you would like to join me by camping or making nearby motel reservations and enjoy more birding on Sunday. This invitation is open to all Audubon members, not only the attendees at the Friday night class. Let me know if you're interested (480-235-1792).

You also might be interested in our October 6 meeting when noted local filmmaker, Barb Davis, will present "Sonoran Desert Birds and Bighorns." We'll see many of Arizona's special lower-elevation species. If you would like some guided birding in the "sky islands" as well as in the lower elevations of our beautiful state, let me know and I'll offer more "follow mes."

Wishing you good birding and many blessings,
Mary Williams, White Mountain Audubon Society President

Below left: participants in Mary's most recent field trip include Barbara, Chuck, Susie, Judy, Kathy, Kathy, Hinde, Gerry, Susie, Yolanda, Ken (**Photo by Mary Williams**). Below right: WMAS President Mary Williams; **Photo by Susie Walker** (WMAS Board Member & Memberships Officer)



OTHER RECENT EVENTS

On Rob's most recent WMAS Field Trip (August 21st), participants saw 32 bird species at the Buena Vista and Bluff trails. Very close observations were made of a young Say's Phoebe, perching Barn Swallows, and a young W. Bluebird. Clear and prolonged sightings were had of a W. Kingbird, a Blue Grosbeak, Yellow Warblers, and Lesser Goldfinchs. Other species noted included MacGillivray's, Yellow-rumped, & Virginia's warblers; Flicker, Hairy, & Acorn woodpeckers; and Broad-tailed & Black-chinned hummingbirds. The usual suspects (jays, nuthatches, flycatchers, etc) were also enjoyed throughout the morning.

Below left: Aug 21 field trip participants include Tom, Ken, Leslie, Kathy, Liz & Susie (**Photo by Rob Bettaso**). Below right: A young W. Screech Owl in N. CA (**Photo by Jamie Bettaso**)



August 4th WMAS General Meeting and Presentation

At our most recent program for the public, John Wilson gave an excellent presentation on the Bald Eagle Nest Watcher's monitoring project, which is a long running effort by the AZ Game and Fish Department. John shared wonderful photos and his experiences with the project these past two years. Thank you John for a very enjoyable and informative show!

Member's Outing: by Dave Cagle

While staying down in Fountain Hills in late June, a late morning rain began to fall, dropping temperatures about 20 degrees. I took a walk onto the adjacent McDowell Mountain Park to get some exercise and see what wildlife might be up and moving. I walked about 3 miles along a dirt access road, which yielded few observations. On my way back home I took several little used hiking trails and desert washes. In these more remote areas I was happy to see 3 mule deer, red spotted toads, Northern Cardinals, a desert tortoise, a diamond back rattlesnake, and two baby Western Screech Owls. It was quite a productive walk for the middle of summer. Remember to always watch where you are putting your feet and hands when hiking in areas and in seasons when rattlesnakes are active. **Photos below by Dave Cagle.**



CALENDAR

All monthly programs begin at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January and February)**. Meetings are at the Pinetop-Lakeside Town Council Chambers, 325 W. White Mountain Blvd until future notice. The programs are free and open to all. You may call **Liz Jernigan (928-532-1511)** for more information on monthly programs and special events.

Here's what's happening in September 2021:

September 1st, 6:30 pm Pinetop-Lakeside Town Council Chambers: Join Lorna McNeil-Cox from the Forest Service for a look at the Weird and Wonderful Wildlife of Fool Hollow and the local area! Come explore their surprising and amazing adaptations for survival that can sometimes look weird or even scary. Some are creatures we see every day without knowing their diverse and interesting secrets in this area of fascinating wildlife.

Sept 18 Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip, Rob Bettaso leads bird watching field trips on the 3rd Sat of every month. If you are interested in attending, please call him at 928-368-8481 and leave a message so that he can return your call to give you the details for the trip(s) that you would like to attend.

Sept 24 Mary Williams, WMAS President, will have the 5th of her 5 classroom and field trips sessions as part of her **Birding the White Mountains series**. The classes are offered at no charge at 6:30 PM at the Pinetop-Lakeside Town Hall. Each contains brief reviews as well as new PowerPoints that focus on birds likely to be spotted on an optional field trip the next morning at 6:30 AM.

AUDUBON MEMBER PROFILE – LORETTA PENA

By Rob Bettaso

In this month's Member Profile, we get to visit with Loretta Pena. Recently, Loretta and I met for a few hours of birding near the Nature Center. As I've learned from previous bird watching outings with Loretta, she is a born birder. What, you ask, does it take to be a born birder? Well, naturally it takes a deep love of birds and, since nothing in Nature exists independently, it also takes an understanding and an appreciation of a healthy ecosystem. A "born birder" is also patient, observant, and instinctively able to make some sense of Nature's many patterns. Add to these traits, a certain lightness of step and a naturally quiet voice and you have a born birder. For those of you who know Loretta, I think you will agree that she possesses all of these attributes.

It is no surprise then that Loretta and her husband Bob were charter members of White Mountain Audubon and that for some years Loretta served as the chapter's Newsletter editor and also oversaw the development of the guest speaker programs. Through the years the meeting venues included the original Town Hall building, a local bank, and the electric companies' "crew room".

But Loretta's interest in Nature goes back further than Audubon and includes her years growing in coastal Oregon (a place where seabirds and forest birds meet) and later attending North High School in Phoenix. It was at ASU that Loretta and Bob met while pursuing degrees in Education. After graduation, they married and moved to Whiteriver where they were both teachers in the public school system. In their free time, while Bob enjoyed trout fishing in the area's lakes and rivers, Loretta (now with their two children to introduce to the natural world) walked and marveled at birds that she soon learned were Blue Grosbeaks, Yellow-breasted Chats, and Hepatic Tanagers. A large rosebush in the Pena's yard provided shelter for numerous songbirds who sought cover from the raptor species that routinely hunted in their neighborhood and the whole family became keen on watching the local birds.

While members of White Mountain Audubon, they also became very active in the Chapter's field trips and in the first version of "Birdathon." Initially, Birdathon was tied to an early iteration of what we now know as Global Big Day. Over time, Birdathon morphed into a month long event and while many participants drifted out of the May time birding extravaganza, Loretta continued her involvement. Birdathon has dwindled down to the point that Loretta has been the sole participant over these past several years. Nonetheless, she has developed Birdathon into such well respected event that her pledges to the Chapter have become our Chapter's single largest source of revenue for many consecutive years!

Thank you Loretta for your dedicated service to the Chapter and for helping foster an increased local awareness and appreciation of our beautiful White Mountain birds. When you're not watching birds, enjoy your organic gardening; as I hear that you're not only a "born birder" but also have a "green thumb." It seems that the plants and animals respond to you as positively as you relate to them.

UPDATES & REMINDERS:

Have you paid your annual membership dues? If not, a friendly reminder that WMAS relies on membership dues for such important Chapter actions as our annual Scholarship Awards to White Mountain area graduating seniors who have expressed an interest in pursuing a career in natural history, conservation, and other related fields. Thank you for helping us to continue to make such programs a regular part of our Chapter mission. Note that the Donation form is at the end of every Newsletter. Dues are for the year in which they are paid and not necessarily good for 12 months following payment (unless you pay in 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 should 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 or Officer position!

Editor's Note: at our last meeting I asked my fellow Board members if we could help keep each Newsletter to 10 pages (or less!) by changing the number of editions within a year from 6 to 12 (so, monthly instead of every 2 months). They agreed and this edition marks our new approach. After giving it a fair trial, please let me know IF YOU DO NOT like this change. I continue to encourage our members to send me their contributions (photos, notes, short articles, etc) for consideration in our monthly Newsletter. Thank you.

–Rob (rhilbe739@gmail.com).

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.

Black Phoebe & Osprey Photos by Kenneth Franklin



White Mountain Audubon Society is dedicated to the enjoyment of birds and other wildlife by providing environmental leadership and awareness through fellowship, education, community involvement, and conservation programs in the White Mountains and surrounding areas.

**White Mountain Audubon Society
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