



## DECEMBER EDITION 2021

### Out on a Limb by Mary Williams (WMAS President)

It's a treasure hunt! Those of you who have birded with me or attended my classes have heard me say this. Have you ever been surprised and thrilled by a treasure that's 'out on a limb?' Here's my favorite:

An AZ specialty bird – target for many residents as well as visitors – is the Elegant Trogon. Found only in very limited areas, we look for this striking species – a large, colorful bird with a Christmas-red belly on the males – in the far southeastern part of the state, especially along the canyon streams of the sky islands there.

The trogon was, of course, on my target list on a January visit to Madera Canyon outside Green Valley a few years ago. I joined a group of birders and photographers who were poised near a large pyracantha bush where he had frequently been observed feeding early in the morning. After what seemed like a long long wait in very very cold weather, I returned to my camper furnace. As I closed the door and glanced over the steering wheel, there he was – perched in the sun in an oak right in front of my van!

So, I scurried back down the road to alert the dozen or so people with bins, scopes, cameras and tripods – who tiptoed behind me up to my van. And there he remained in all his glory – out on a limb!

Photo from Cornell Labs [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org)



## White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2021 Chapter Officers:

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

## 2021 Board Members:

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Mary Freemon, Joan Patrick, Susie Walker & Rob Bettaso.



### President's Corner by Mary Williams:

Greetings birders near and far! If you are a member of WMAS, watch for your email to vote to approve our slate for the 2022 Board of Directors. Thanks for voting.

One of my highlights in the past month included another opportunity for community outreach. 55 Second Graders from the Whiteriver Elementary School visited the White Mountain Nature Center on November 4. Susie Walker, WMAS Membership Director, and I offered one of five outdoor stations (on birds of course) where they learned more about the beauty and fascination of our natural world. A small group who performed a special musical tribute in the Apache language is shown inside the Center.

The annual WMAS Timber Mesa CBC (Christmas Bird Count) again will be held on the first Saturday of January. That's New Year's Day this year. The National Audubon Society has been conducting these surveys of birds to help with scientific and conservation efforts since 1900. I am serving again as coordinator and compiler and we're glad that many of our previous volunteers will participate. We can always use more people to count birds in our assigned 15-mile circle. All assignments and submissions will be done by email. If you would like to participate, please contact me at [mary.williams@arizonachristian.edu](mailto:mary.williams@arizonachristian.edu) or 480-235-1792.

Also let me know if you would like to get together to bird this winter – near or far. Wishing you a joyful holiday season and best wishes for a new year!

Children from the White Mountain Tribe doing a traditional dance at the Nature Center (Photo by Anne Groebner)



## OTHER RECENT EVENTS

On our most recent WMAS Field Trip (Nov 20<sup>th</sup>) participants saw 25 bird species at Telephone Lake and Pintail Marsh. We had a full turn-out of participants including, for the first time in my 6 or 7 years of leading the monthly birding outings, a young family of four birders (including two children, both smaller than your average Canada Goose). This was a very welcome occurrence and it was excellent to have kids on board (including a budding birder, still in a stroller). I can think of no better way to introduce children to the natural world than by watching ducks on a pond. Remember, monthly outings now run year round, so give me a call to sign up for future walks (Rob 928-368-8481).

### November 3<sup>rd</sup> WMAS General Meeting and Presentation

At our most recent program for the public, Dan Groebner presented fun and fascinating information on bird vocalization (songs and calls). Dan's career with the Arizona Game and Fish Department has involved many years of exciting projects for "nongame" species ranging from native reptiles and amphibians to the Mexican Gray Wolf. Dan was a crucial part of the team that established the wetlands area at the Pinetop Regional Office and he continues to conduct important research pertaining to the wetland's fauna. Thank you Dan for a great show and your important work!

Dan Groebner recruits volunteers to help establish nesting box sites (bluebirds, kestrels, etc). Photo by Rob Bettaso



## CALENDAR

All **monthly programs** begin at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January, February & March)**. 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 December 2021:

#### **December's Presentation – Sue & Bruce Sitko: The Wonders of Spring Bird Migration in Texas**

Greetings! My husband Bruce and I appreciate so much being invited to be the presenters at our upcoming December meeting on December 1. We will be sharing our journey through Texas this past April to witness the incredible spring bird migration that Texas offers. The last meeting of the year is always a fantastic time to gather together to celebrate our past year of making new friends and seeing birds, and to start thinking of next year's potential birding adventures. We hope you can join us, bring a friend or two, and have some fun!

To whet your appetite, here are a few tidbits of what our presentation will include:

**First of all, birds!** From shorebirds to warblers, both Bruce and I kept our camera shutters clicking. Our trip coincided with the Galveston Island "Feather Fest" birding and nature photography festival, and Bruce took three workshops on photographing birds. He is working diligently to edit his best pictures, and you'll see some great up-close images!

**Second, we'll review our route, and include information that you may find useful in planning your own trip to Texas.** Our trip included stops and stays at Fort Davis, Enchanted Rock, and Lost Maples state parks; the migration hot-spots along the upper Texas coast; and Galveston Island. We camped out in our trailer at both natural areas and urban RV parks, and have some knowledge of places to stay along the way even if you're not campers.

**Third, we'll bring material** we gathered during our trip: maps, bird checklists, books, travel guides...whatever we collected, we'll have it available for you to peruse!



We want to acknowledge our dear friend Barb Davis, who prompted us to explore the upper Texas coast and provided us with a wealth of pre-trip information that helped us plan, and most importantly, ENJOY, our trip. Thank you Barb!!!

Hope to see you all at our December meeting!

Sue and Bruce Sitko

**December 18<sup>th</sup> Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip:** Monthly bird watching field trips on the 3rd Sat of every month (for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year, including the winter months). If you are 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.

#### **A NOTE FROM ONE OF OUR NEWSLETTER READERS**

Recently, we've heard from Michael S. Ameigh, who has started a podcast entitled: **Arizona Bird Call**, which is aimed at birders interested specifically in Arizona birds and issues that affect them. Mike has his PhD and his podcast goals include curating interesting and useful material from the many online birding resources that deal specifically with Arizona birds and will illuminate the work done by the different Audubon chapters in Arizona, including ours. Mike's podcasts also include a birding events calendar in each episode. Mike also draws from other bird conservation sites including the following: AZGFD.gov, BLM.gov, AZIBA.org, AZ Field Ornithologists, Sky Island Alliance, Patagonia Area Alliance, among many others.

Arizona Bird Call is not a commercial venture, and Mike has no intention of soliciting financial support. According to Mike, the best way to get a sense of what he is doing is to listen to a few episodes, episode 1 in particular. New episodes upload weekly, on Wednesdays. Mike is careful to attribute sources and, where indicated, bylines and dates of publication. A simple Google search using the search terms "Arizona Bird Call Podcast" will take you to his site and Mike welcomes all feedback (send to [arizonabirdcall@gmail.com](mailto:arizonabirdcall@gmail.com)). The direct link to the series is: <https://www.buzzsprout.com/1830489>. Thank you Mike for your excellent work.

**WMAS MEMBER PROFILE – KEN MCBYRD-BELL**  
**BY ROB BETTASO**

Does it seem to be a contradiction to be both a former semi-truck driver and a birder? Maybe at first, but if you give it a bit of thought you soon realize it makes complete sense. Both activities require dedication, concentration, and skill. Both can also involve early morning wake-ups and often take one into and through beautiful landscapes.

Here's another: being a professional house painter and a birder? Again, one finds commonalities in that both involve the beauty of colors and an eye for detail. Both require a steady hand and a high degree of discipline. And both allow one to spend time enjoying the out-of-doors while affording endless freedom for one's ears to wander -- picking up bird calls and songs.

Now an easy one: being a musician and a birder. I doubt that any elaboration is needed here.

Let me now introduce you to Ken McByrd-Bell: former truck driver, current house painter, long-time composer and performer of music, and (wait for it....) birder, or should I say, mcbirder, since Ken's very name includes one of his many passions (a quick list of a few others: mathematics, history, theology, science-fiction, and philosophy).

On one of my first birding outings with Ken, in between identifying and observing over 25 different species of birds at a local woodland, Ken described to me the intricacies of fractals, cryptocurrencies, and algorithms. He also taught me how to tell difference between the calls of two similar sounding woodpecker species – the Hairy and the Downy.

In the past year that I've been birding with Ken, I have also noticed that as Ken approaches a perched bird, he often talks softly to the bird so as to reassure it and allow us to get as close as possible so as to facilitate identification. Ken has much better results with this technique than most birders I know who rely on audio play-back to draw in birds. Ken also spends more time recording bird vocalizations (both unidentified species as well as those he is well on his way to memorizing) than in trying to induce birds to come to taped vocalizations. Once Ken returns to his home, there he takes the time to compare his outdoor captured recordings to those he can find on-line and by doing so, he not only learns the species responsible for the call or song, but also something about the properties of the sonograms themselves.

To conclude my profile of Ken, let me quote his own words when I asked him why birds and nature are important to him: "I find peace and enjoyment out among God's creations. Even when my heart is heavy, there is something about being alone in the midst of nature that can be very comforting. There are often happy little discoveries along the way, and my travels through the forest give me a chance to let my thoughts process themselves in the absence of life's numerous distractions."

Ken, like most birders, is a joyful person



## **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 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!

## **A MYSTERY SOLVED**

Recently, one of my fellow Board members (Mary Freeman) sent me a photo she took of a summer visitor to the plants near her mailbox. She wondered if I might be able to identify the odd looking insect in the photo below. I looked through my guide and saw a few bugs that looked like they might be in the same Family but they were not an exact match. So, I sent the photo to my brother and some of my former colleagues (and longtime friends) at the Game and Fish and quickly learned that the common name for the critter is the Peachtree Borer Moth. Additionally, according to iNaturalist (a species database) this visitor to Mary Freeman's neighborhood is the first reported occurrence of this species in Arizona! Good work Mary on having a sharp eye and a curious mind. –Rob

The Peachtree Borer Moth (aka: bird food). Photo by Mary Freeman



## 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.

Dazzling WMAS T-shirts for sale (money from sales goes exclusively to our WMAS's operating budget). If interested, call Rob at 928-368-8481; supplies limited (a great gift idea).



**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  
P. O. Box 3043  
Pinetop, AZ 85935**