



## JANUARY EDITION 2022

### **Out on a Limb by Rob Bettaso (WMAS Field Trips Leader and Newsletter Editor):**

I'm standing in the early morning light, near my front gate, watching the birds that are feeding from the two suet blocks I have hanging in a grove of young aspen trees. We had a bit more snow last night and the birds are hungry after their winter night's fast. I count both Pygmy and White-breasted nuthatches at the suet, along with juncos, House Finches, and an occasional Steller's Jay. Later in the day, it seems like the House Sparrows and Western Scrub-Jays take over at the feeders, but for now, they are nowhere to be seen. Suddenly, a flicker roars into view and makes one quick hop from a nearby branch and onto one of the wire-mesh cages that holds the suet. All other birds clear a path for this massive member of the woodpecker family.

After watching the yard birds I head to a nearby pond to see what water birds are on hand. The sun is just coming over the pines as I begin a species inventory: Mallard, check; Gadwall, check; Green-winged Teal, check; Bufflehead, shoveler, ring-necked, widgeon -- all check. Ah, and there, nestled in the cattails is a pair of Hooded Mergansers, their crested head feathers elegantly furled downward. No snipe today, though earlier this month I had seen 6 of them all milling about together, on and near the beaver lodge.

During our cold months, the waterfowl are better represented (species-wise) than they are during our warm season. The same applies with our diurnal raptors; and Bald Eagles, in particular, become much more numerous. We have about as many sparrow species in winter as we do in summer, unless you count each subspecies of junco; in which case, the number of different sparrow/junco species are much higher in winter. Otherwise, we lose more migrants to the southern climes than we gain from northern visitors wintering here in the White Mountains.

It seems to me that the birds that remain year round are, in some ways, the most impressive. They can endure our warmest July days AND our coldest January nights. They find scarce food during the cold times, and take advantage of the warm season abundance such that they can raise a new generation of fledglings.

After an hour or so at the pond, I head home and attend to chores for the rest of the morning. More snow falls in the afternoon so I break out my cross-country skis and spend a couple of later afternoon hours skiing at a chunk of open space near my house. When I return home the last bird I see before going in for the evening is a chickadee. He's gorging himself on the suet and as the dusk fades to black I watch him leave the feeder and land on a sluffing piece of bark on a cottonwood snag in my yard. Suddenly, he tucks himself between the loose bark and the inner core of the dead tree; snug for one of our long winter nights. Small places for small things! Something about this delights me and I head inside and wonder what I should do first: cook up some dinner, or start a fire in the hearth.

## **A TRANSITION:**

If a bird is not perching, it's probably flying. It's not much different with people and so, while we have enjoyed sharing a perch with Joan Patrick (a Board member of many years) she's recently decided it's time to once again take wing. We wish her well on her flight and on all the perches on which she might alight. We know she intends to stay busy here in our community, spending much of her time in nearby woods, mountains, and along the streams, but also, more frequently enjoying her freedom and the chance to soar. We'll still see you at our monthly programs, Joan, and as often as we happen to meet on the trails. – Your Friends at the White Mountain Audubon Society

## **White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2022 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
Membership: Susie Walker	480-205-6119
Webmaster: Alan Vickers	

## **2022 Board Members:**

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



### **President's Corner by Mary Williams:**

Happy New Year! Anyone besides me have birding 'resolutions' each year? As someone who enjoys the listing aspects of eBird – and, yes, we hope to offer last summer's Covid-cancelled eBirding seminar in 2022 – I try to best my own previous years' numbers of species logged as I keep track of what I see, where and when. I also like to visit birding hotspots where I try to attain – or maintain – my status as # 1 or in the top 10 recorders at that location. And I know that I'm helping scientists and policy-makers track trends and use data to help protect birds and their habitats.

Acknowledging the somewhat competitive aspects – and what sometimes appear to be aspects of obsession – within the birding community, I try to reduce my 'carbon footprint' in retirement by enjoying and logging the birds where I live between Show Low and Snowflake as well as by adding birding stops with necessary trips elsewhere – and I encourage you to do the same. Although always aware of the species I have not yet recorded on my life, year, state, county and hotspot lists, I seldom 'chase' a coveted bird someone else has posted unless I'm combining it with another trip. My camper van, which gets surprisingly good gas mileage, provides wonderful opportunities to do this as well as to connect with family and friends and to enjoy mini-vacations. And I'm always delighted when birding friends meet me!

With that said, I am happy to report that many totally enjoyable, peaceful and relaxing overnights in 2021 in Apache County yielded 149 species, besting my 2020 list of 142. Happy also to report that places me as # 3 in the top 100 eBirders there as of 12/20, one less than # 2. # 1, who lives in the Chinle area, has logged 163. Congratulations to our WMAS friend Ken, who lives in the Vernon area and frequently works and visits in Navajo County, for attaining # 6 status there with 162 Navajo species and # 4 with 143 Apache species logged on eBird.

Must confess that, although I earned a # 3 status, I did not meet my goals for 2021 in Navajo County – 186 as compared to 205 in 2020. And must congratulate WMAS friend John for his # 1 status with 223 species logged as of 12/20/21!

Ventured to Maricopa County in early December to bird with returned Canadian friends Emily and Kingsley and added a few species to my dismal AZ list for 2021. Only 237 compared to my usual 285 or so. As of 12/20, # 1 logged 441!

Don't these numbers make us appreciate how awesome AZ is for birding? A few of us are planning mini-vacations not only in the Phoenix valley but also to Madera Canyon and to the Patagonia and Sierra Vista areas in upcoming months. Want to join us?

Here's a photo Emily took of one of the huge American White Pelicans foraging with Northern Shovelers, Green-winged Teal and Black-necked Stilt – along with more than 50 species – on our trip to the Gilbert Water Ranch on 12/3. Another photo gives us a better look at a male Green-winged Teal – one of the waterfowl we also hope to see wintering in Navajo County on the Audubon Society's Timber Mesa Christmas Bird Count circle on New Year's Day. Thanks again to all our volunteer 'citizen scientists.' Eager to begin 2022 birding fun! Blessings, Mary

Two photos by Emily Dunning:



#### **OTHER RECENT EVENTS:**

On our most recent WMAS Field Trip (Dec 18<sup>th</sup>) only a few brave souls made our chilly outing to Big Springs pond and Walnut Creek. We were rewarded with about 2 dozen bird species (including up close views of Hooded Mergansers and several other species of waterfowl). As an additional bonus: we didn't see but 2 other people during the 2+ hours we spent birding (nothing against other people, but they do sometimes scare off the birds). Remember, monthly outings now run year round, so give me a call to sign up for future walks (Rob 928-368-8481).

#### **December 1<sup>st</sup> WMAS General Meeting and Presentation**

At our most recent program for the public, Sue and Bruce Sitko presented fun and fascinating information on their birding trip to Texas in the spring of 2021. Sue always has such a unique and very charming speaking style and Bruce's photos are of Nat Geo quality. Thank you both for a great evening and for helping close out our very successful 2021 Speaker's Programs series.

A rapt audience enjoys Sue's tales of finding everything from a Blackburnian Warbler to Tricolored Herons in Texas. Meanwhile, Bruce dazzled us with his photographs of the birds they saw on their trip. Photo below by Rob Bettaso



#### CALENDAR:

We have completed our monthly programs until April of 2022 but remember, when we start up again in 2022 we expect that all **monthly programs** will continue to begin at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January, February & March)**. Our program meetings venues may change in 2022 so stay tuned for more information in that regard. 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.

**January 15<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.

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

Item 1 - Mary W. recently sent me a link to a site that discusses environmental stewardship issues for those of us who enjoy birding. <https://bryanpfeiffer.com/2021/12/02/birdwatchings-carbon-problem/>

Item 2 - Redge M. sent me information pertaining to on-line Continuing Education courses including some that are geared to birders.

Hello Bird lovers!

Thank you so much for your in-class poll responses and emails, they helped me immensely. I've proposed the following classes on birds and birding for Spring 2022:

**Woodpeckers!** Learn all about Arizona birds, plus stories of famous woodpeckers: Ivory-billed, Imperial, and Pileated. 3 sessions.

**Birders' tech tools and tips:** learn and practice when and how to use Laura's favorites: ebird, Sibley Birds field guide smartphone app, and Cornell Labs websites. We'll focus on features to help you select places to find birds, and to identify what you see. 3 sessions.

**Field trips:** 3 separate single sessions for early morning in-person birding with a guide; 2 in Tucson, one in Green Valley. Sign up for one, or more if you wish. Enrollment will be limited.

More details and registration when OLLI announces Spring 2022 courses later this year. I hope you'll sign up and tell your friends!

### **Bonus content about Owls**

I wish I had more time to tell you about more owls! Here are a few choice items from the cutting room floor.

**Snowy Owl:** a lovely 4 ½ minute video profile of this extraordinary bird. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjeF3LqEoCc>

**Spotted Owl:** "The most controversial bird in US environmental history: the Northern Spotted Owl." This bird resides in old growth forests in the northwestern US, has lost habitat to the logging industry, and became the "poster child" for tension between commercial interests and environmental activists in the 1990s. That conflict died down, but a new threat emerged, this time a natural one: competition from the Barred Owl, expanding its range into the Northern Spotted Owl's territory. This 9-minute video tells the story. The Barred Owl isn't competing yet with the Southwest's near-threatened Spotted Owl population, but it's probably only a matter of time...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay5giUCJXBU>

**Reference pages for Arizona owls:** See attached PDF with the bird yardstick pages for large and small owls. Print them out to bring along when you're birding in a time and place when you might see owls. Better still, take your smartphone with a field guide app (I like Sibley Birds, but there are other good ones). When you hear an owl's sound, open the app and listen to a few possible species to try to find a match. I'll teach you how to do this, and lots more, in the Birders' tech tools class!

Happy birding, keep your eyes and ears open for birds of prey this fall, and I'll see you in the spring!

Laura  
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### **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! And remember, you can be on the Board without being an Officer.

## 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.

Snazzy 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**