



## APRIL EDITION 2022

### Out on a Limb by Mary Freemon (WMAS Board Member):

April showers bring May flowers! Or so they say. The first day of spring this year is supposed to be ushered in with a snow storm, however. Actually I hope so as this winter has been colder and drier and we could use the extra moisture.

I've had a steady amount of my usual winter birds this year but nothing unexpected ..... until last week! I saw a robin for the first time, also the spotted towhee (my favorite) and I heard a mourning dove somewhere. The finches are singing in the trees and there are signs of nest building. I'm pretty sure I saw the red-naped sapsucker back as well. I believe they are all looking forward to the change of seasons as much as I am. Can't wait until I can sit on my porch with a cup of coffee..... Comfortably!!

Happy birding to all!

### 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 Spring. It's the most wonderful time of the year! And, with a tip of my Tilley to Andy Williams and his song writers, "It's the hap-happiest season of all... there'll be field trips for hosting, rare species for boasting and birdwatchers out in the snow... there'll be much mistltoeing (Phainopeplas?), and hearts will be glowing when migrants are near!

Migration March began a few weeks ago as wintering waterfowl depart and passerine pairs leave winter flocks to establish territories and scout nest sites. Listen for pairing House Finch, Meadowlarks, Bluebirds and Robins sing their sweet Spring songs. Say's Phoebe and White-winged Doves, of which there are only a few here in winter, are now arriving in pairs and establishing territory. Who's next? Hummers? Orioles? Tanagers? Warblers and Grosbeak and Chat, oh my! Egret and Willet and Stilt, oh my. (So now we have 'Off to see the Wizard' as well as a Christmas song stuck in our heads.)

Spring brings the thrill of breeding plumages. How does a male Ruddy Duck not only change feather hues to prove his name but also develop a bright blue bill? Hormones? An overnighter at Lyman Lake on March 11 yielded a good view of one and also earned an eBird rare bird alert for my posting of five beautiful migrating American Avocet. That change from white to peach head and neck and chest feathers is so lovely. (See Cornell Labs [allaboutbirds.com](http://allaboutbirds.com) photo below.)

My very best bird sighting in a long time was on March 12 at the Little Colorado River at South Fork west of Eagar. A busy bobbing American Dipper was gathering muddy water weeds along the snowy bank. I was admiring early pussywillows when the bird – impossible to see in my cell phone photo below so added another [allaboutbirds.com](http://allaboutbirds.com) ID – flew out and back under the bridge where nest construction no doubt is underway. Spring!

I look forward to seeing you at Buffalo Bill's on April 6, May 4, June 1... Do list your best birds for us too!

Blessings, Mary

Avocet photo (left) by Cornell Labs. S. Fork LCR photo (center) by M. Williams. Dipper photo (right) by Cornell Labs.



#### **UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT:**

The White Mountain Audubon Society is pleased to announce a 2022 award of a \$4000 scholarship to John Wilson of Taylor AZ. John will be entering the Biology program at NAU in Flagstaff this fall and pursuing a degree in Wildlife Biology.

John is a graduate of Snowflake High School and is completing preparatory course work at Northland Pioneer College. His interest in birds and birding have been evident for the past few years as he has held the top eBirder position in Navajo County. At the age of 16, John was awarded a scholarship to attend the Western Field Ornithologists annual meeting in NM and decided on a career based around birds. He served as the guest speaker at the WMAS August meeting when he spoke about his volunteer work with the Eagle Watch program with AZ Game and Fish Department.

The scholarship check will be presented to John at the Audubon's Society's first meeting of 2022 at 6:30 on Wednesday, April 6, in the Hickok Room of Buffalo Bill's Tavern and Grill in Show Low.



John Wilson of Taylor AZ has been awarded a \$4000 scholarship by the White Mountain Audubon Society. He will attend NAU to pursue a degree in Wildlife Biology. He is holding an Eagle nestling while participating in the AZGFD Bald Eagle banding program.

Below is an essay by John.

Since I was young, I've always had a passion for the outdoors. I was fortunate enough to grow up in a family that loved being outside. From around the age of 5, I was taught how to hunt and fish, and was taken out to do so every time the opportunity arose. With this, I was taught the importance of wildlife conservation. Every habitat, species, family, and individual within an ecosystem plays a crucial role in maintaining the stability of that ecosystem, and in the modern world that stability is being pushed constantly for a wide variety of reasons. I want to do something that makes a positive impact.

Around the age of 14, I picked up bird watching with my mom as a little side hobby. Since we were always outdoors anyway, we decided to try and count birds while we were out. It wasn't until the age of 16 when I was awarded a scholarship to attend the Western Field Ornithologists annual meeting that I had even considered a career based around birds. After that meeting I was hooked. I've since learned as much as I can about the identification, distribution, habitat, and diversity of as many birds as I can. With this knowledge, I've been able to document 281 species in Navajo County, including several county first species, subspecies, and hybrid birds. All of this knowledge and documentation is extremely important to me, as bird populations have fallen as much as 25% across all species since 1970. Data like this helps us to understand population trends, density, and diversity among species across the globe.

Now, at the age of 19, my end goal has shifted a little, but I've remained true to helping wildlife. I'm still currently focused on birds and plan to base my career around birds as much as I can, but the closest thing offered in terms of a bird-related degree path at the bachelor's level is a standard Biology degree. With this information, I have been accepted into Northern Arizona University for the Fall 2022 semester, and will be completing a Bachelor of Science in Biology with a certification in Wildlife Biology. I have also been in contact with a graduate student at NAU in regards to a field technician position, studying Western Yellow-billed Cuckoos, a threatened subspecies of Cuckoo. If awarded your scholarship, I will be putting all the funds directly into the cost of tuition at NAU. This will help me greatly in achieving my goal of a career in Wildlife Biology and will help future generations of wildlife (including, but most certainly not limited to birds) to be studied and taken care of for all to enjoy.

Thank you for considering me for this scholarship and thank you for your time.

Sincerely, John Wilson

#### **SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT FOR A GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR:**

WMAS also offers the \$1000 Bob and Loretta Pena Memorial Scholarship each year to a graduating high school senior in Navajo or Apache Counties who will pursue higher education preparing for a career with the potential of having a significant positive effect on the environment and birds. Application deadline is May 6. For more information contact high school guidance counselors or Liz and Tom Jernigan at [liztom@frontiernet.net](mailto:liztom@frontiernet.net).

## NEW WMAS MEETING SITE:

Beginning on April 6 this year, WMAS will meet in the private dining room at Buffalo Bill's Tavern and Grill at 1 North Bison Preserve Way in Show Low. The meetings will start again at 6:30 on the first Wednesdays of each month. It is located at the Bison Golf Club on the east side of Hwy 260, about 1 mile from the directional light at the intersection with Hwy 60 in west Show Low. If you're coming from the north, it's ~1 mile beyond the light on Hwy 260 at W Old Linden Road.



## CALENDAR:

We resume our monthly programs this coming **April** and for 2022 we expect that **all monthly programs** will continue to start at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in January, February & March when there are no meetings)**. Our monthly program meeting site HAS changed in 2022 so remember to come to the new meeting site at **Buffalo Bill's Tavern and Grill at 1 North Bison Preserve Way in Show Low**. 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.

**April 6** At our first meeting of 2022, WMAS Chapter President Mary Williams will outline events and activities for the upcoming year including information about guest speakers, an eBirding seminar and her 'Birding the White Mountains' classes. Her PowerPoint presentation also will show the 'Best Birds' submitted by monthly meeting attendees in 2021.

**April 16<sup>th</sup> Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip:** Monthly bird watching field trips on the 3rd Sat of every month. 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.

## **MOST RECENT FIELD TRIP:**

On March 19<sup>th</sup> we visited the U.S. Fish & Wildlife's Alchesay National Fish Hatchery located on the White Mountain Apache Tribe's lands. Our birding guide for the outing was Jon Orona (thank you Jon!) and you can read the details of our adventure in Jon's Field Trip Summary (watch for Jon's summary to be posted on our WMAS website). My only comments regarding the trip pertain to the minor differences in species and behaviors that I noticed between the Friday that I scouted (solo) for the trip, and the next day (Saturday) when I joined Jon and the other 4 participants.

Bird species were similar between the 2 consecutive days (23 species and 24 species) but on Friday a Belted Kingfisher, Say's Phoebe, & an American Dipper were seen along the N. Fork of the White River but not seen on Saturday; while on the Saturday, White-throated Swifts, 2 Black Hawks, & a Red-naped Sapsucker were observed but had not been seen on Friday. When present, all of these species can be easy to see and to identify as they are generally distinctive and are either loud (kingfishers/black hawks) or quite active and eye-catching (dippers/sapsuckers/phoebe). In the case of the White-throated Swifts, however, I was very impressed that Jon saw them as they were quite far off and they are a tiny bird to begin with (Jon has both very sharp vision and acute hearing).

As far as the behavioral differences between the two days, on the 1<sup>st</sup> day (Friday), crows and robins were present in HUGE flocks and were, in the case of the crows, very active in the air while in the case of the robins, they moved in large flocks up and down along the river's riparian corridor. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day (Saturday), both crows and robins were still present (and robins were still quite abundant), but in much lower numbers and were more subdued in their flocking behaviors. These differences may have been due to a logging crew that had been cutting trees in the area in the days leading up to the 2 birding outings and ceased on the Thursday prior to my scouting trip. In other words, some species may have been just returning to the area on Friday -- soon after the sound of chainsaws ended (the area around the hatchery may be richer in food & other resources the birds seek due to greater plant diversity as a result of hatchery landscaping and also the availability of fingerlings and waste fish feed). Also, on Friday, the full hatchery crew was working while on Saturday, the facility is only staffed with one worker.

Thank you for your interest and please feel free to join us on a future field trip. --Rob

Common Black-Hawk (photo by Susie Walker)



## **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 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**