



JUNE EDITION 2022

Out on a Limb by Dan Groebner (AZ Game & Fish biologist):

Secretive Marshbird Morning on the Mountain

The morning started out with a calm and clear sunrise promising a chorus of responses from those secretive marshbirds, like Sora and Virginia Rails or if we were lucky, an American Bittern. White Mountain Audubon members gathered at Jacques Marsh on a recent morning to help document the local breeding population of these birds that are totally dependent on thick growths of wetland plants. A quick briefing included listening to the most likely bird calls we would hear and how to record our results on a data form. After impatiently waiting 5 minutes to let things settle down upon our arrival at the first survey site, our sound file started playing the calls of the various marshbirds potentially present over our speaker, trying to elicit a response from a jealous or territorial male of that species. Would our calls convince one of these shy marshbirds to speak up?

The White Mountains are not known for an abundance of wetlands and marshes compared to other lower elevation areas like the Colorado River and some of its tributaries. We're fortunate to get more rain and snow than most areas in the state but our porous malapai soils and abundance of slope keeps water moving and not loitering around the area long enough to provide the year round standing water needed for sedges, rushes, cattails, and other vegetation which marshbirds prefer to nest in.

Therefore, many of our largest White Mountain wetlands are actually called constructed or managed wetlands maintained by treated sewage water. The water is clean enough to return to the environment but still has organic nutrients that could cause algae blooms or consume too much oxygen from the water to the detriment of other aquatic life. In addition, the sheer volume of it could overwhelm local streams. So it is allowed to evaporate and provide moisture for surrounding vegetation in ponds built just for that purpose. The Allen Severson Wildlife Area at Pintail Marsh and nearby Redhead Marsh were created for the same purpose and also provide quality marshbird habitat.

Since our efforts were part of the official National Marshbird Survey, intended to accurately measure bird populations over time, there were specific protocols to follow. This included stopping the survey if the winds became too loud to hear any birds more than 100 yards away, and you guessed it, gusts over 30 mph suspended the survey until better weather. The group did observe many other bird species like Osprey, waterfowl, and wetland songbirds like the Common Yellowthroat. Typically, surveyors hear multiple responses during these surveys and luckily there is another month to complete the routes on more calm mornings. Audubon members who are interested in helping conduct more marshbird surveys with experienced and trained leaders can contact Rob Bettaso (928-368-8481) or Dan Groebner at dgroebner@azfd.gov.

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:

What gives you delight, fascination, enchantment? As a child in Wisconsin, I recall those feelings about birds and flowers and butterflies - especially the regal Monarchs - and I am grateful that I continue to experience them now. I was enchanted in a different way as a child when I discovered this little 1894 poem by John Bannister Tabb:

The Butterfly

*Leafless, stemless, floating flower,
From a rainbow's scattered bower,
Like a bubble of the air
Blown by fairies, tell me where
Seed or scion I may find
Bearing blossoms of thy kind.*

Sadly, when I visited Wisconsin in August a few years ago, I was very aware that there were far fewer migrant birds and butterflies than I had experienced as a youngster and young adult. Let's do what we can to protect these wondrous creatures. Plant pollinator gardens, especially milkweed, and encourage others to do so. Join efforts to preserve wintering habitats in Mexico. If we protect butterflies, we protect the birds and the bees. Protect birds and bees and butterflies and we protect the earth!

I look forward to seeing you at our June 1 meeting for Ron Miller's presentation about the Monarch butterflies he experienced this winter in the Sierra Madre.

Global Big Day 2022

Thanks to the many 'citizen scientists' who helped make Navajo and Apache Counties Global Big Day on May 14 a success. Species numbers are still being tallied but here are a few highlights:

WMAS Coordinators Sue Sitko and Mary Williams appreciated efforts by many eBirders that day: Suzanne DeRosier, Erin Devine, Hinde Silver, Liz & Tom Jernigan, Jody and Richard Inman, and Linda White-Trifaro and Mitchel White in Apache County & Rob Bettaso, Jim Boone, Bret Elgersma, Marleigh Freyenhagen, Gerry Hodge, Kate and Ray Kellman, Larry Langstaff, Karen Martin and Judy Carrier, Ken Mbyrd-Bell, Samuel Neat, Tony Potuchek, Lori Romo, Raymond Rugg, Thomas Stonestreet, Anita Strawn de Ojeda, Dale Wolcott, Tom Watson and Beth Whittman in Navajo County.

We were especially happy that Marleigh located the continuing rare Trumpeter Swan at Happy Tank out of Taylor and that Thomas located the continuing rare Harris's Sparrow in St. John's. Gerry added a not-so-common Common Black Hawk to our count in the Whiteriver area again this year. Anita managed to find both Scaled and Gambel's Quail as well as Cassin's and Gray Vireos, and many more species, in Holbrook and Joseph City. Tony had American as well as our more common Lesser Goldfinch at his feeders. Larry documented both Double-crested and the less common here but increasing Neotropic Cormorants in the rookery at Telephone Lake. Rob logged a migrating American White Pelican and a Peregrine Falcon at Rainbow Reservoir. We were happily surprised to find White-winged Dove (2 or 3) in Springerville and a nice view of a Warbling Vireo (also in Springerville). We were disappointed to not observe the American Dipper in Greer where it's normally included in our count.

A special round of applause for one of our scholarship winners – John Wilson who, along with his sister Kayden, graduated from Northland Pioneer College that day. Not only did he and his mother Betsyann spend a few hours logging more than 50 species in Snowflake before leaving for the commencement in Holbrook, but they also submitted an eBird checklist for the 4+ hours of the outdoor ceremony! And... they managed to log a few more species – including the only recorded Navajo night-calling Common Poorwills at Schoens Dam – after returning home. We know that NAU will have two great new students this fall!

Blessings, Mary

CALENDAR:

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.

June 1st Ron Miller will give a presentation about Monarch butterfly's wintering site in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico. He will also discuss Forests for Monarchs, a private NGO that grows seedlings to improve and create more habitat for the Monarchs while they are in Mexico.

June 18th 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:

In our monthly "Out on a Limb" opening column, Dan has done a fine job of explaining our May field trip (obviously different from our usual monthly birding outings) and the only thing I would add is that we (Dan & his colleagues in the natural resource agencies) & WMAS Board Members are looking forward to increased opportunities for WMAS members & the general public to assist on various projects such as the "secretive marshbird surveys." So, feel free to give Dan (AZ Game & Fish Department) or any of us on the Board a call at any time if you would like to participate in volunteer, wildlife conservation efforts here in the White Mountains. Also, we would like to thank the participants who assisted in the marshbird survey this May: Arlene, Gerry, Cathy, Kathy, Betsy, Jan, Karen, & Joe! And thank you Dave Cagle for assisting Dan in explaining the survey protocol to our volunteers; as the only participant on the May outing who had actually conducted a marshbird survey in years past, your assistance was very valuable.

Oh yeah, one last thing: on our Saturday training we not only learned the basic techniques for doing scientific surveys for certain marshbirds, we were also treated to another Peregrine Falcon sighting, this time, an adult that came swooping down into the marsh at just above cattail levels and put all of the Redwing & Yellow-headed blackbirds into a noisy tizzy. The bold falcon continued to terrorize the marsh birds for about 5 minutes with his strafing runs just over the heads of

the blackbirds, but eventually sailed up high over the marsh and left the area. The Peregrine Falcon is one of those all-too-few species that have pulled back from the brink of extinction and are now relatively more common than they were in recent decades; although it is important to note that they are still a long ways from their higher population levels in the days of John James Audubon himself....

Hope to see you at our next field trip, when we may return to our typical fun activity of strolling along a local trail and spotting whatever birds choose to grace us with their presence. Although then again, you never know when we may offer up another, different kind of field trip and, in fact, I think Jon Orona is scouting sites for a future nocturnal trip when we plan to go on an "owl prowl" in some nearby patch of wildlands.

Thanks and see you soon. --Rob

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
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