



## FEBRUARY EDITION 2023

### Out on a Limb by Susie Walker (WMAS Board Member):

Today on this beautiful snowy day I'm enjoying birding from the comfort of my warm and toasty cabin. After filling my feeders this morning, which include wild bird seed, black oil sunflower seeds, sunflower hearts, thistle, peanuts and homemade peanut butter suet I am ready.....I see Pine Siskin, Mountain Chickadee, Steller's Jay, Acorn Woodpecker, House Finch, White-breasted Nuthatch and Dark-eyed Junco. I like to think five of the Juncos are the ones that hatched in a hanging plant outside my backdoor last summer. After a few hours of enjoying the calm of the sweet birds, in comes the flock of a hundred or so Pinyon Jay that have been seen around town for the last several weeks. Time to refill the feeders!

Photos below by Susie Walker (top left: the Dark-eyed Junco is a connoisseur of suet; top right: a mob of Pinyon Jays can empty a feeder in minutes; bottom left: a handsome Steller's Jay eyes a peanut; bottom right: a mulie slurps birdseed)



## White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2023 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	

## 2023 Board Members:

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Mary Freemon, Susie Walker, Gerry Hodge, Carol Axford, & Rob Bettaso.



### President's Corner by Mary Williams:

How do so many birds survive in winter? Every night that the thermometer on my porch – and the weather forecast for our area north of Show Low – plummets below 32 degrees I feel concern for the neighborhood birds who delight me every day.

Scientists tell us that they fluff their feathers for insulation and hunker down over their feet with their beaks tucked beneath their wings. Some species huddle together in groups, and all seek sheltered spots out of wind and bad weather. We know, too, that many animal and bird species experience torpor – a physiological state of metabolic depression in which body temperature, breathing and energy expenditure drop in cold, rain and snow.

Every night, for quite a few months now, our local small flock of Mountain Bluebirds have used not only local evergreens but also the I-beams that support the roofs of neighborhood carports. Every night – and every morning before dawn – I open my door slowly when I take my Chihuahua out for his little business trips, because every night there's a sweet female fluffed and nestled down in her favorite spot above our heads. Sometimes she is joined by others in a few spots at our house, and I know they use some of the neighboring carports too. There are no heat sources in any of these structures.

If she were to die, we would find a stiffly frozen body; but each morning, as the sun begins to rise, she gradually lifts her head and takes off to sit in nearby trees to catch some sun and then find food sources with other members of her flock. (The junipers have a lot of berries after two good monsoons and some of our residents are feeding the birds mealworms.) More information about our local Bluebirds follows. I hope you too have the food sources and shelter that helps you to enjoy our wintering birds!

Wishing you good birding and many blessings, Mary

PS: Call me (480-235-1792) if you would like the gate code to attend a class at Juniper Ridge on February 13 at 3:00:  
**Hotspots: Birding Cottonwood Wash.** A bird walk will take place at the Wash in Snowflake at 8:30 the next morning.



Mountain Bluebirds (Photo from [allaboutbirds.org](http://allaboutbirds.org), Cornell Lab of Ornithology)

### Clean and Install Nest Boxes NOW

Many bird lovers see wintering birds that were born in the area. This is true for the cavity-nesting species who use bird houses provided for them. As an example, it is very likely that some of the small winter flocks of Mountain and Western Bluebirds at Juniper Ridge Resort between Show Low and Snowflake fledged from the boxes that were cleaned or installed last February. Bluebird pairs have been observed already inspecting those boxes this January! Therefore, the time to clean and install nest boxes is NOW. (The boxes used by both species there in 2022 were cleaned out in October.)

As part of a nest box trail program, Pinetop AZ Game and Fish donated boxes which replaced many dilapidated but well-used ones and added a few at good spots in the area. Here's a link to the anecdotal report to Dan Groebner, AZGFD Nongame Specialist, as well as to the residents who helped monitor the boxes. [E:\Juniper Ridge Resort Nest Box Trail Project.docx](#) Notice there were problems with non-native predatory House Sparrows.

It's always fun when nest boxes attract other desirable cavity nesters such as our native Violet-green or Tree Swallows, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Juniper Titmouse or sweet-singing House Finch. Different-sized boxes are available for other cavity nesters such as American Kestrel, Nuthatches, Chickadees, Wrens, Flickers and Woodpeckers.

Do you have nest boxes on your property? NOW is the time to be sure they're cleaned and to properly erect new ones of appropriate size and design. Good ones can be ordered online or purchased at most Walmarts or local hardware stores. (Or you can build your own.) Don't waste time and money on cutesy decorative ones that are highly unlikely to attract birds and might even harm them.

Nest boxes should be  $\sim\frac{3}{4}$ " thick wood, not painted or stained, not plywood or particle board, and with no perches. Dimensions should be  $\sim 10$  to  $13$ " tall and  $\sim 5$ " wide with 1.5 holes. (1-9/16 for Mountain Bluebirds) Predator guards are recommended. They should be mounted  $\sim 5$ ' above the ground on poles or trees in open areas within  $\sim 100'$  of trees or shrubs. Southeast orientation is best. Get rid of cats in the area. If the box has a swing-open side and you know a non-protected House Sparrow or European Starling is using the box, you may legally remove their nests. Our beautiful native species will appreciate it. Have fun!



Nest box mounted at about ~5' in the juniper on the left. It faces the recommended southeast and was used in 2022 by Mountain Bluebirds who fledged five young.  
(Photo by Mary Williams at Juniper Ridge Resort.)

#### WMAS CALENDAR:

For 2023 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)**. 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. Monthly meetings are **held at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside**.



Weather permitting, on **Feb 2<sup>nd</sup>** you can go birding with Mary Williams at Pintail Lake at **9am** (photo below left) Take Hwy 60 through Show Low and turn north on Hwy 77. Look for the brown sign on your right after a few miles and take the gravel road to the parking area.

If you would like to attend a PowerPoint series featuring birding hotspots offered at Juniper Ridge Resort off White Mountain Lake Road north of Show Low, contact Mary Williams at 480-235-1792 to get the gate code. The one on **Feb 13, at 3pm** will feature the species found this time of year at Cottonwood Wash in Snowflake (photo below right) and there will be a bird walk there the next morning (weather permitting). We will meet in the parking area on the right side of the bridge on the far north end of Snowflake off Hwy 77 toward Holbrook at 8:30a.

Feb 25<sup>th</sup> (Saturday) the annual Eagle Fest will be held at the White Mountain Nature Center and at Rainbow Reservoir in Pinetop/Lakeside. Details will be announced and you can also contact Dan Groebner at the AZ Game and Fish Department for details. Some information can also currently be found at: <https://www.outdoorssw.com/eagle-fest-2023>

Adult Bald Eagle perched in a snag at one of our local waters (photo by Jon Orona)



Also in February please check out the poster below:



Sponsored in part by:



### MOST RECENT 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS:

Jon and I agreed that the icy roads, snowy trails, and very cold temps that were forecasted for Jan 21<sup>st</sup> were severe enough not to have the regular 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday field trip. Therefore, I decided not to email out the monthly invite for the

two consecutive Saturday birding activities on the 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully Jon will be free to lead the February field trip since we weren't able to do his January outing.

Alternatively, while the weather conditions were not suited for casual birding on the 21<sup>st</sup>, much of Jan was well suited for "Fitness Birding" -- since X/C skiing can be a vigorous activity done in good birding habitat. As such, we had many Fitness Birding adventures in what seemed to be the snowiest January I've experienced in my 18 yrs living "on the mountain." So, for my several January birding outings, our groups ranged in size from 3-5 skiers and the birds we encountered included the usual forest and field species that occur here during winter: various types of juncos, jays, nuthatches, finches, thrushes, sparrows, and woodpeckers. Our most frequent companion while skiing was the mighty Mountain Chickadee -- a diminutive species that seems to thrive even in the coldest and snowiest conditions. --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! **We are especially keen to recruit diverse candidates to be a part of WMAS, including more people below the age of 60 (so that we can plan for our Chapter's future) and also more people that are representative of the various demographic groups found in the White Mountains. And remember, you can be on the Board without being an Officer -- in fact, you can even just attend a Board meeting as a guest. Please feel free to join us (call Rob: 928-368-8481)**

#### Photos Contributed to this Month's Newsletter:

Photo Left: Many people have sent us photos of Pinyon Jays at their feeders this winter, including Carol in Show Low; Photo Right: this out of town shot came from Bill who has family/friends up in Montana who sent this photo of 3 woodpecker species (a "hat-trick" of pileated, hairy, and downy -- as you scan from left to right).



**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.

**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**