



MARCH EDITION 2023

Out on a Limb by Gerry Hodge (WMAS Board Member): Reflections On My First Summer Birding the White Mountains and Navajo County

It took almost 2 years, but the builder finally finished our new summer cabin in Lakeside. Last year was our first to escape the Tucson heat for a full 6 months in the White Mountains. As an avid outdoors person, birding is the perfect activity for getting outside and “off the couch”. Birding in Navajo County can be a solitary activity. Here, you are lucky to encounter another birder in the field once a month. If a rare bird is reported in Tucson, you immediately share the experience with 200 other birders. One positive affiliation I quickly discovered was with the White Mountain Audubon Society and quickly found birding companions in Ken, Mary, and Rob. The White Mountains also rekindled my wife’s love of birding and has given me another frequent companion in the field.

In the White Mountains, I became more proficient at studying zoomed-in satellite images, deciphering land ownership, and learning the meaning of signs and fences as I stumbled my way around Navajo County. My 4-wheel drive often got a real workout and I found out I should stay on the pavement for a couple of days after a rain so as not to plug the wheel wells of my truck with 10 inches of red clay.

I also learned the behaviors and habitats of a few new birds and traded in several old backyard birds with a new set that included Pygmy Nuthatches, White-Breasted Nuthatches, Broad-Tailed Hummingbirds, and Lewis’s Woodpeckers. And the adage of “it’s not unusual to see unusual birds” certainly applies to the White Mountains.

After having been involved as a public lands advocate in the State of Washington for 16 years, I found it refreshing to meet many local land managers and finding them approachable and friendly. Stop and look at some of the interpretive signs along your walk and give respect to all those agencies that work together to create, preserve, and protect the habitat we love to roam about.

My best advice for someone new to birding or new to the area is to join White Mountain Audubon and get involved. Come to meetings and go on bird walks. You too can soon find some ‘bird-nerd’ compatriots as I did.

Photos below: (left) Gerry took this photo of his truck's tire after a summer birding outing in the White Mountains area; (right) Susie Walker took this photo of Big Springs this past December, which reminds summer-only residents of what they are missing during our beautiful winters.



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:

Do you know anyone who...?

Is a homeschooled middle or high school-level student who wants to learn more about birds and birding? Tell him or her about the PowerPoint Presentation – Beginning Birding: Basics – at the Show Low Library at 10:00 on March 15.

Is a graduating high school senior in Navajo or Apache Counties planning to pursue a degree and career which has the potential of having a significant positive effect on the environment and birds? April 8 is the deadline for submitting the WMAS application for a \$1000 scholarship. It is available through their guidance counselors or they can contact Secretary Liz Jernigan.

Is a student whose family lives in Navajo or Apache Counties and is now enrolled in a college, university, technical or trade school and pursuing a degree or career which has the potential of having a significant positive effect on the environment and birds? April 8 is the deadline for submitting the WMAS application for a \$4000 scholarship. It is available through the Friends and Family office if they are students at Northland Pioneer College or they can contact Secretary Liz Jernigan.

Do you or others you know want to learn more about birds and birding? You can enroll now at Northland Pioneer College for a series of classes in Show Low in April and May. (See poster)


Do you or others you know wish to attend a 'Birds of Whiteriver' class? Enrollment is now open for May 10 at 10:00 at the NPC campus in Whiteriver. (See poster)

I'm working on PowerPoints and handouts and planning bird walks for the morning after classes now. Join us! Wishing you good birding and many blessings, Mary

BIRDING CLASSES

LEARN ABOUT BIRDS & BIRDING

BEGINING BIRDING CLASSES



NPC White Mountain Campus, Show Low

Attendees of these classes will receive priority invitations to attend bird walks led by the instructor.

Presented by the President of the White Mountain Audubon Society, this series of 3 classes will feature information about the species of birds most likely to be found locally, and how to find and enjoy them with a focus on ways to protect their declining populations.

TUESDAYS 6:30-8
April 18, 25, May 2
\$5 each

928-536-6244 | ccl@npc.edu | npc.edu/noncredit-classes

REGISTER NOW TO SAVE YOUR SPOT

Free!

THE BIRDS OF WHITERIVER BEGINING BIRDING CLASS



PRESENTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE WHITE MOUNTAIN AUDUBON SOCIETY: MARY WILLIAMS

NPC Whiteriver Center

Northland Pioneer College
COMMUNITY & CORPORATE LEARNING

This PowerPoint based class of approximately 90 minutes will feature information about the species of birds most likely to be found on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation and about how to find and enjoy them. It will also focus on ways to protect the declining populations of birds in this area.

WEDNESDAY
May 10th, 10am-12pm
Tuition cost: free

*CHILDREN AGES 12-16 MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY AN ADULT.

928-536-6244 | ccl@npc.edu | npc.edu/noncredit-classes

2022 Christmas Bird Count Results
From Audubon Compiler Mary Williams

WMAS volunteers logged 81 species, four of which were firsts for the Timber Mesa CBC - a Merlin, the Wilson's Zone-tailed Hawk near Little Mormon Lake, Shipley's feeder White-throated Sparrow, and the rare Winter Wren found by Larry Langstaff at the AZGFD Old Hatchery Trail.

Although there are many variables that affect our stats, WMAS has been participating in CBC's since the 80s. Obviously, our counts are affected by weather and by the quantity and quality of volunteer surveyors within our circle. However, there is some significance to our highest-ever counts. Pinyon Jays, a species of national concern, are conspicuously enjoying many feeding stations as well as a productive year for Pinyon Pine in our area this fall and winter. 271 were seen on December 31!

Although waterfowl numbers were down, a high was logged with 278 Common Merganser. Also highs: 3 Common Loon. 52 Acorn Woodpecker. 4 Williamson's Sapsucker. 12 Hairy Woodpecker. 44 Northern Flicker. 2 Peregrine Falcon. 81 Pygmy Nuthatch. 629 American Robin. 31 Cassin's Finch. 21 Lesser Goldfinch. Good work.

Thanks to 21 volunteers who joined me on the dreary last Saturday of December: John Shipley, Larry Langstaff, Carla Whalen, Lyndie Mason Warner, Julie Neff-Encinas, Kathe Anderson and Lois, Gerry and Terry Hodge, Liz and Tom Jernigan, Sue Sitko and Suzanne, Ann Hilliard, Jon Orona, Rob Bettaso, Susie Walker, Ken McByrd-Bell, Carol Axford and a special thanks to John Wilson and his mother Betsy who submitted a record 13 checklists.

Perhaps you too can volunteer for the 2023 year-end Timber Mesa Christmas Bird Count. And remember to mark your calendars for to participate on May 13 for the Global Big Day in Navajo County or Apache Counties.

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.**



March 18th - The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip: Monthly bird watching field trips on the **3rd Sat of every month** and alternate between Rob Bettaso & Jon Orona. If you're 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.

Also, on the **fourth Sat of each month** I lead a "Fitness Birding" outing that combines slightly strenuous activities (longer hikes, bicycling, paddling, X/C skiing) with birding. The next **Fitness Birding trip will be March 25th**. Feel free to give me a call if you're interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

MOST RECENT 3rd & 4th SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS:

On Feb 18th, four of us visited a mostly frozen Woodland Lk, which was one of the few places we could go that had a plowed trail (most places were under fairly deep snow and/or had icy footing). The birding was only so-so (in terms of our species count) but we did watch a flicker as he engaged in some noteworthy behavior: during the warm season,

flickers are avid ant-eaters and spend lots of time on the ground slurping up ants with their long tongue; but, we were surprised to witness a winter flicker digging in the snow to probe the moist earth for what we assume was pupating larvae (see photo down below).

For the “Fitness Birding” event on Feb 25th, I thought it might be better if that day was dedicated to the annual Eagle Fest that the AZ Game & Fish Department leads (thank you Dan Groebner for your coordination of that event, even though due to a storm the event had to be re-scheduled until later in March). Nonetheless, throughout Feb several of us were able to combine our birding with snow-hiking and x/c skiing and on one outing we added the Clark’s Nutcracker to the other jays we have seen during our Fitness Birding outings (the other jays being the Scrub, Steller’s, & Pinyon).

Field trip photos by Gaston Porterie from our February outing (clockwise from top left: Red-wing Blackbirds; American Coots & Ring-necked Duck; Lewis’s Woodpecker; Northern Flicker):



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).**

Photo below by Carol Axford (a mixed flock of finches/juncos in Show Low area)



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**