



MAY EDITION 2023

Out on a Limb by Rob Bettaso (WMAS Field Trips & Newsletter)

Terminology – Raptor vs. Bird of Prey (You say: “Po Tay Tow” I say “Po Tah Tow”)

We’ve all heard the terms “birds of prey” and “raptors,” but is there a difference between the two terms? Well, practically speaking, the two terms are used interchangeably because they both refer to predatory birds that hunt or otherwise capture other animals (the “prey”). And while “prey” can be any living creature, generally we use it in terms of animals that are more complex than insects (many non-raptors eat insects) so this would include fish, amphibians, reptiles, other birds, and mammals (in short, the “vertebrates”).

Some of the birds that qualify as raptors (or birds of prey; and from now on I’ll simply use the term “raptor”) include the following: eagles, hawks, and falcons. So, are vultures raptors? Vultures are carnivorous (they eat meat) but generally it is in the form of dead animals so, technically speaking, they do not “prey upon” living animals and are therefore not raptors. How about owls? Yes, owls seize other living creatures to eat, so they qualify as raptors (most owls hunt at night so are generally referred to as “nocturnal raptors” while most of the eagles, hawks, and falcons hunt during the day, so are called “diurnal raptors”).

But food type and/or the means of hunting/obtaining prey are not the only aspects to be considered when using the term raptor. One must also consider the bird’s “morphology” – which means the shape of the overall bird as well as the shape of the different parts of the bird. When you add in this aspect of the term, then a raptor must have a body shape and body parts that are designed for capturing and consuming living animals. So, what kind of body does it take to capture and consume a living animal? A raptor must have a hooked beak (for tearing open its prey); hooked, sharp talons (for clutching and holding its prey); and an overall body shape and wing shape that are built for speed, agility, and power so that the raptor can catch and over-whelm its prey.

But, there is another trick to our terminology, since other birds -- including various species of shrikes and vireos (which are in the songbird, or passerine, grouping) and seabirds (including diverse groups, such as jaegers and cormorants), all have hooked beaks. And many birds that perch on rocks, cliffs, and/or vegetation (bushes and trees) have claws that could be confused with talons. In fact, many of the jaegers and shrikes not only have hooked beaks but they also hunt and eat live vertebrate prey, but, they are NOT considered raptors or birds of prey. Additionally, there are other species that are also not raptors but do have raptor-like wings and body shapes and include such birds as nighthawks (no, nighthawks are not even a true “hawk”) and kingfishers.

By now you may be a bit confused, so let’s simplify things and merely state that for most purposes, “raptors” (and again, these birds are also known as “birds of prey”) include the following general groupings of birds: ospreys, kites, harriers, hawks, eagles, falcons, and owls. Some ornithologists (scientists who study birds) would add to that list the caracaras and vultures, but for our purposes, we will not, since those groups are primarily scavengers that feed on carrion (dead meat; and no, they can’t have me yet).

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
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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.

PHOTO MOMENTS

Bill Waldron found this Chipping Sparrow nest & Carol Axford watched this Great Egret hunting at Woodland Lake



President's Corner by Mary Williams:

Have you ever seen a Cedar Waxwing? This year? When I saw the lovely poster that the Cornell Lab of Ornithology supplies for the 2023 Global Big Day on May 13, I went back into my own eBird records to answer my questions for you. I recall enjoying this handsome species many times over the years – in my native Wisconsin throughout the year and in winter in Florida where I lived for 10 years. They also tend to be a wintering species here in Arizona where I began eBirding, and I was reminded that I enjoyed a small flock this year on January 6 at the new hotspot at the end of 6th Street above Show Low Creek.

eBird is so much fun! It's interesting when I look back in the records that Cornell Lab keeps for me online that I not only recall the Cedar Waxwings I saw at various locations but also the birders who were with me at the time – especially those for whom this species was a life bird. Sometimes beautiful weather (or not) comes to mind for some of the days of sightings and even sounds and aromas that accompanied the checklists on which Cedar Waxwings appear.

In addition to keeping lists for those of us who are confident of our bird identifications, eBird is a great online source for finding the best places to go birding and what species and how many are being seen there. We can see who is recording what they see and hear. We can look at distribution charts to see what time of year species are likely to be seen. Some birders even include photos and sound tracks of bird songs and calls in their checklists that we have access too. (Some of you might recall the eBird presentation that Gerry Hodge gave at our October meeting or some of the slides I've included in my PowerPoint presentations. Let us know if you wish to learn more.)

Consider joining a team that includes an eBirder for this year's Navajo County Global Big Day on Saturday, May 13. Perhaps you too can enjoy Cedar Waxwings and many other of our beautiful migrating, breeding, and year-round species. Contact me if you wish to volunteer. (Or Sue Sitko if you wish to survey birds in Apache County.) Hope to see you at 6:30 at our May 3 meeting at the Nature Center, when Ron Miller will be our guest speaker, and the next morning at 6:30 for a bird walk there.

Wishing you good birding and many blessings, Mary



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**.



As Mary W. mentioned in her item above, Ron Miller will be our next speaker (May 3rd, 6:30p at the Nature Center). Below is a brief bio of Ron for those of you who have not yet had the pleasure of meeting Ron on a Tracks, Nature Center, or Audubon outing or seeing one of his very interesting presentations.

Ron is a certified silviculturist with undergraduate degrees from Humboldt State University and College of the Redwoods and an M.S. from the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He retired as a supervisory forester with thirty-five and half years of government service, primarily with the Bureau of Indian Affairs branch of forestry. Ron has been published in American

Forests, Journal of Forestry, and many U.S. Forest Service publications and is currently writing a series entitled “Magnificent Trees of the White Mountains” in his home state of Arizona. An avid hiker, Ron has climbed the highest peak of all of the contiguous 48 states. He also walked the 500-mile Camino de Santiago across northern Spain. Ron was recently recognized by the Arizona Department of Forestry & Fire Management as the “Citizen Forester of the Year” and travelled to Phoenix to accept the award at the State Capitol. Congratulations Ron!

May 20th - 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.

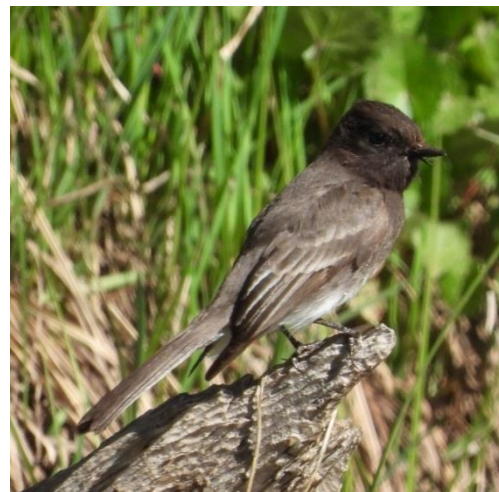
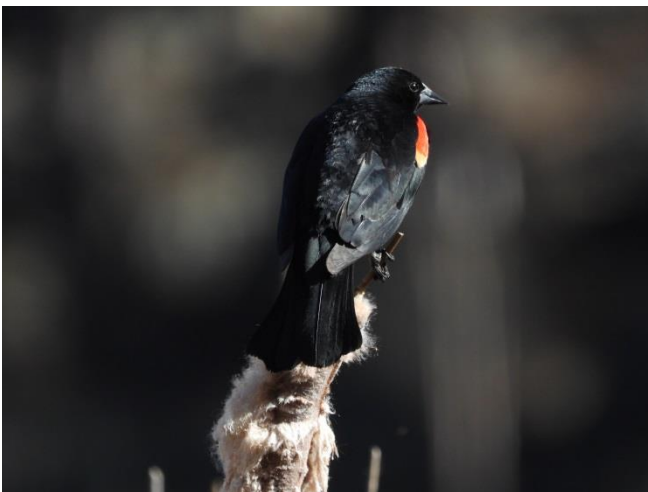
Also, on the **fourth Sat of each month** I lead a “Fitness Birding” outing that combines slightly strenuous activities (longer hikes, bicycling, paddling, X/C skiing) with birding. The next **Fitness Birding trip will be May 27th**. Feel free to give me a call if you’re interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

MOST RECENT 3rd & 4th SATURDAY FIELD TRIPS (Rob Bettaso):

On April 15th, five of us watched birds along the Buena Vista trail near Show Low. Some of our migrating warblers had returned and we worked hard to find a singing Grace’s Warbler and later Black-throated Grey & Yellow-rumped warblers. We also saw a soaring Zone-tailed Hawk and, while hiking down from a high point, watched a small flock of Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Our sightings were so engrossing and the weather so beautiful that when we were done we were surprised to see that our GPS registered 4 miles of walking.

For the “Fitness Birding” event on April 22nd I knew in advance that I would be joining the many participants celebrating Earth Day at the Nature Center so did not announce a Fitness Birding outing for April. That makes 3 months in a row where Eagle Fest and Earth Day events kept us from doing some adventuresome birding, so, let’s try and get out in May and maybe combine our enjoyment of birds with a couple of hours of bicycling.

WOODLAND PARK TRAIL SYSTEM PHOTOS COMPLIMENTS OF GASTON PORTERIE (top left: Red-winged Blackbird; top right: Black Phoebe; bottom left: Great-horned Owl; bottom right: Bald Eagles)





Two Notes Below From Dan Groebner (AZ Game & Fish Dept)

2023 White Mountain Eagle Fest -- Finally!

When the scheduled 2023 Eagle Fest Saturday fell between 2 very “generous” White Mountain winter storms and had to be postponed, the White Mountain Nature Center and Liberty Wildlife were able to reschedule to a beautiful Saturday on the mountain a month later. Over 100 folks from Phoenix, Tucson, Show Low and the Pinetop/Lakeside area learned about the history of eagles in Arizona, their biology and nesting habits, as well as things people can do to help the local nesting and migratory population of bald eagles. Liberty Wildlife's ambassador bald eagle, Cochise, provided a majestic close-up example of our national symbol, posing for photographs with people attending the Eagle Fest. The associated field trip to Lazy Oaks Resort on Rainbow Lake offered views of a few eagles, even though it was relatively late in their migration season. The 2024 White Mountain Eagle Fest will be moved back to its original scheduled date in February, making more migratory eagles available for viewing.

Citizen Scientist Birders Needed

The Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD) needs volunteers to conduct surveys of marshbirds, nesting colonial birds, and other species like pinyon jays and southwestern willow flycatchers throughout the White Mountains this spring. Training and required equipment can be provided. Contact Dan Groebner at dgroebner@azgfd.gov and I hope to hear from you soon.

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).**

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
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