



## FEBRUARY EDITION 2024

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

Well here it is, another year has gone by and we've started 2024! This is a Leap Year so we'll have an extra day of birding. This past year has been keeping me busy with traveling ... and/or being sick from it. Please be careful all. There are lots of viruses are going around right now so keep warm and hydrated.

My bird bath and suet feeder have been busy as well. The numbers and species were different this past summer possibly due to a lack of rain and fewer wildflowers in my yard. This winter the Red-naped Sapsucker was back (thanks Rob, for pointing it out on your recent visit!). I also saw a Great Blue Heron at Woodland Lake Park one day. Recently it has been mostly juncos, chickadees and nuthatches around the yard.

One of my trips took me to Peru in October where we saw Andean Flamingos at a very high altitude, which I didn't expect (14,000 plus feet!!). We also saw lots of Black Vultures in Cuzco, wild chinchillas, and lots of alpacas and llamas!

My Christmas trip took me to Seattle and Canada where we saw fields of Trumpeter Swans and lots of Bald Eagles and nests right along the sides of the road. We even saw one nest with a parent popping its head out! They didn't seem bothered at all by the traffic below. Unfortunately my cellphone was unable to take sharp photos out of the car window at 60 mph!!

I wish you all Happy Birding in 2024!



Photos above (Left: Dark-eyed Junco by Gaston Porterie; Right: Pygmy Nuthatches by Rob Bettaso)

## **White Mountain Audubon Society (WMAS) 2024 Chapter Officers:**

President: Mary Williams	480-235-1792
Vice-President: Tom Jernigan	928-892-3004
Secretary: Ron Pedersen	505-313-9343
Treasurer: Tom Jernigan	928-892-3004
Field Trips: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Newsletter: Rob Bettaso	928-368-8481
Membership: Susie Walker	480-205-6119
Webmaster: Alan Vickers	

## **2024 Board Members:**

Mary Williams, Tom Jernigan, Liz Jernigan, Mary Freemon, Susie Walker, Gerry Hodge, Ron Pedersen, & Rob Bettaso.



### **President's Corner by Mary Williams:**

Have you participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count? Those of you who know me might be thinking, 'Why is she promoting ANOTHER citizen science project? I just want to enjoy birds and don't really care what their names are or how many there are!' Well...

The reason that scientists who study birds have been able to document the loss of billions (yes, that's a B!) of birds that we should have been able to enjoy during the past few decades is exactly because of the citizen science bird surveying projects by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell University Lab of Ornithology. The White Mountain Audubon Society chapter just finished our sponsorship of the 124<sup>th</sup> annual Christmas Bird Count and we again will coordinate the Global Big Day in Navajo County in May. The data that volunteers locally and worldwide input through eBird – the online database of Cornell – helps scientists to see patterns and advise us of the things they believe we can do to help birds.

Please ponder an old cliché here – the idiom of 'the canary in the coal mine.' If birds are dying off, what exactly are we doing to ourselves?

Humans have made decisions throughout history about the things to encourage and those to discourage, the things to destroy and those to preserve for themselves and for those who come after them. Sadly, the decisions have often led to unintended consequences. We almost lost our national symbol, the Bald Eagle, to the ravages of DDT before it was banned and was discovered to also affect humans negatively. In the future, will the nicotine-based pesticides now in use in agriculture be identified as detrimental to us as well as to birds?

If the decisions to cut down and poison native species of trees and plants in our cities and suburbs, in our parks, in our agricultural fields, and in our yards mean we have eliminated or poisoned our native species of birds – as well as the extremely important bees and other insects that pollinate crops – than what are we doing to ourselves? People need natural spaces too. People succumb to poisons too. How do we best evaluate the true long-term costs of our decisions?

So... back to my initial question about the Great Backyard Bird Count. It's February 16 to 19. If you know birds and have an eBird account, please survey and enter the birds in your yard and neighborhood. Try to get to some of the birding hotspots that you notice are not being covered by other local birders. If you don't know the names of bird species you enjoy, or don't have an eBird account, feel free to give me a call.



### White Mountain Audubon Society Calendar:

For 2024 we expect that **all monthly Audubon programs** will continue to start at **6:30 pm on the first Wednesday of the month (except in December, January, February & March when there are no meetings)**. The programs are free and open to all. Monthly meetings are **held at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 Woodland Road, Pinetop-Lakeside**.

### Eagle Fest: February 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 – Dan Groebner

The full moon in January is often called the Wolf Moon but here in the White Mountains you could probably also call it the Eagle Moon thanks to the abundance of migrating eagles using local lakes and streams that are not completely frozen over yet. You could say that eagles are the true snowbirds as they fly south from their summer nesting areas in Canada and the northern US every winter just far enough to find the open water, which provides waterfowl and fish for a food source.

Although the number of summer nesting bald eagles in the area continues to rise, winter in the White Mountains is the best time to see more of our National Symbol perched along the shoreline of almost any lake with open water. That's why the White Mountain Eagle Fest always takes place in the "dead" of the Arizona winter (Minnesota visitors: please don't send any lols as we survived 8 winters in Ely).

This year's Eagle Fest will be held on Saturday, February 24, at the White Mountain Nature Center, 425 S. Woodland Road at 900 am. This year's sponsors include the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Liberty Wildlife, Lazy Oaks Resort on Rainbow Lake as well as the White Mountain Nature Center.

Game and Fish will provide an update on current eagle populations and management in Arizona. A dedicated crew of 3 biologists and numerous seasonal contracted "Nestwatcher" technicians monitor nests and eagle populations statewide through a variety of methods, including long hours of observation, climbing tall ponderosa trees swaying in the wind, and hovering over nests in tight canyons sometimes from a safe distance in a helicopter to check on nest or chick status.

**Local Bald Eagles (photo on left by Jon Orona; photo on right by Gaston Porterie)**



**The Regular Monthly WMAS Birding Field Trip:** Monthly bird watching field trips on the **3rd Sat of every month**, alternating between Rob Bettaso & Jon Orona. If you're interested in attending, feel free to give me a call and leave a message so that I can return your call to give you the details for the upcoming trip. The **next outing is Feb 17<sup>th</sup>**. 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 Feb 24<sup>th</sup>**. Feel free to give me a call if you're interested (Rob: 928-368-8481).

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

You may have noticed that I didn't send out my monthly field trips announcement and that is because I expected muddy and/or slippery trails and/or inclement weather. Sure enough, the trails were muddy/slippery and so I just birded with a few friends who, like me, have boots that are suitable for such conditions. If you are also somebody who isn't dissuaded by slightly difficult conditions, you can always feel free to give me a call and I'm happy to take field trips with just a person or two. Also, in her President's Corner up above, Mary W. mentions the "Great Backyard Bird Count," so, if you want to count the birds we see on our 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday field trip as part of this year's "Great Back Yard Bird Count," we can do that. –Rob

**CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT (CBC) 2023/2024 (note: our Chapter is the White Mountain Audubon Society but our CBC "Count Circle" is called the "Timber Mesa" circle).**

First and most importantly, on behalf of our Chapter, I would like to offer enormous thanks to **Ken McByrd-Bell** for doing all of the data entry this year! Ken also provided a downloaded summary (attached separately) of the birds we saw on our official "count day" of Dec 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. On that day, we had a total of 73 species (~4149 individual birds); 10 bird-watching participants; 20 planned birding sites

and many others that were opportunistic (plus “incidental” sightings); we logged ~23 total birding hours; and had reasonably good weather (31-54F). I didn’t notice any rare bird species but we did seem to have higher numbers of Common Goldeneye ducks and Red-breasted Nuthatches compared to what I recall from previous years (I think my first year with this Chapter was 2014 and I’ve participated in every year since, but, I can’t say that I have really studied the bird numbers over the years). If you have any questions feel free to give Ken or me a call and if we can’t answer your question, we can tell you how you can access the official National Audubon Society’s CBC database. Thx. --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).**

**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 and visit our website.

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.