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AZFO NEWS

Studying Arizona Birds

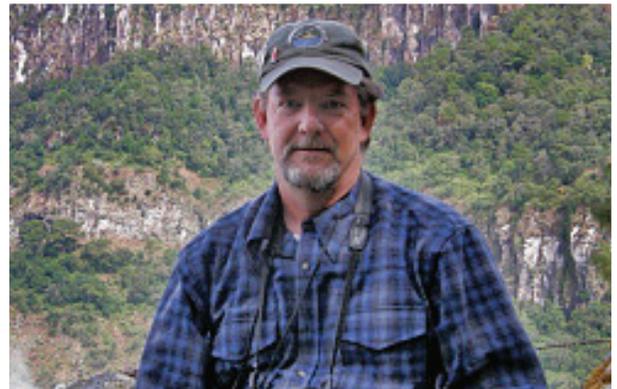
Winter 2013

Volume 4, Issue 3

AZFO ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT

By *Doug Jenness*

Kurt Radamaker has been elected to serve as the president of the AZFO for the next two years. He succeeds Troy Corman, who served in this capacity since the AZFO was founded eight years ago. Radamaker, a founding AZFO member, has served on the Board of Directors and developed the organization's website. He grew up in Southern California where he started birding at the age of eight and by 15 had completed Cornell Laboratory's Seminars in Ornithology. He taught ornithology for four years at the University of La Verne, a not-for-profit university near Los Angeles, and has led bird tours to several areas in the United States, Mexico, and Central America. He has published numerous articles on birds, including in Arizona Birds Online, and is the author or a contributor to the following publications: *Arizona and New Mexico Birds* (Lone Pine Press, 2007); Species accounts for Bitterns, Herons and allies, and Ibises and Spoonbills in *The Complete Guide to North American Birds* (National Geographic Society, 2006); *Birds of Florida* (Lone Pine Press, 2006); *Birds of The Baja California Peninsula: Status, Distribution, and Taxonomy* (American Birding Association).



Corman's outstanding leadership in founding and guiding the AZFO in its early years was recognized at the AZFO state meeting 5 October

with the presentation of an AZFO Achievement Award. Although he is stepping down from central executive responsibility, he plans to continue to be active in the AZFO and to help out as needed. Corman has worked for the Nongame Branch of the Arizona Game and Fish Department since 1990 and coordinated the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas project.

Two other new individuals were added to the Board of Directors at the state meeting: Muriel Neddermeyer, who was elected as Membership Secretary replacing Steve Ganley, and Eric Hough, elected as a board member replacing John Arnett.

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GALE MONSON RESEARCH GRANTS

By *Pierre Deviche*

For the third year in a row, Gale Monson grants were awarded for research and surveys related to the state avifauna. This year's grant recipients are:

Zachary Smith – Spring raptor migration monitoring from the Sierra Prieta Overlook, Prescott National Forest: A pilot study

David Vander Pluym – Bird migration at Lake Havasu

Chris McCreedy - Plumage differences and wintering distributions of Sagebrush and Bell's Sparrows in California and Arizona



FACEBOOK: CONNECT WITH BIRDERS AND AZFO



By *Muriel Neddermeyer*

Facebook has been a growing way for birders, young and not-so-young, to connect with each other and the birding organizations they are passionate about.

On an individual level, there are many benefits to having birding “Friends” on Facebook. You can connect easily and quickly on a variety of topics such as bird identification and behavior or simply to share birding experiences and photos. You can also join any of the growing number of Facebook birding groups to converse on specific areas of interest, such as the Advanced Bird ID Group. It is a great way to connect with other birders locally and around the world that you might not otherwise connect with.

On a different level, Facebook is a great way to stay connected with the organizations you are passionate about, like AZFO of course! And many others such as the American Birding Association, Western Field Ornithologists, eBird or the local Audubon Society chapters. When you “Like” a fan page for an organization you receive their posts in your newsfeed, giving you up-to-the minute news and information that you may not find on websites.

AZFO has recently created a fan page of our own and as of this writing we have 119 followers who are receiving news, announcements, and information from our page. We hope that you will “like” us too! Just go to <https://www.facebook.com/ArizonaFieldOrnithologists> and click “Like”.

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*Blue Jay – November 2013, Santa Cruz Co. –
Photo/Lois Manowitz*



*Brown Booby – August 2013, Mohave Co. –
Photo/Tom Benson*

LATE SUMMER AND FALL SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

By *Eric Hough*

The most memorable bird encounters of the summer and fall were of rare pelagic species showing up in Arizona, most notably the jaw-dropping discovery of a dead, probable HAWAIIAN PETREL in Yuma. Positive identification is still pending. Previously known as Dark-rumped Petrel, which was recently split into two species. This specimen likely constitutes the first inland North American record of either species. Coinciding with reports of many boobies being found along the Pacific coast and at the Salton Sea, three BLUE-FOOTED BOOBIES were documented at Lake Havasu (Mohave/La Paz Co.) and one at Patagonia Lake (Santa Cruz Co.). BROWN BOOBIES were also at Imperial Dam (Yuma Co.) and Lake Havasu. A photo-documented SOOTY SHEARWATER at Mitty Lake (Yuma Co.) will be only the second state record if accepted.

Rare gulls included multiple HEERMANN'S GULLS in four counties, single LAUGHING GULLS in four counties, and single SABINE'S GULLS at Big Lake (Apache Co.) and Lake Havasu. Also notable were a PARASITIC JAEGER at Willow Lake in Prescott (Yavapai Co.), and a very early RED-NECKED GREBE on Lake Havasu. Thought to originate from coastal areas along the Sea of Cortez, two juvenile REDDISH EGRETS at Coolidge (Pinal Co.) and another one at Peña Blanca Lake (Santa Cruz Co.), and single ROSEATE SPOONBILLS at Benson (Cochise Co.), Superior (Pinal Co.), and Tucson (Pima Co.).

Another fantastic discovery was an Asiatic migrant with only three prior state records, a SHARP-TAILED SANDPIPER photographed north of Gila



Red-necked Grebe – September 2013, Mohave Co. – Photo/Brad Singer

Bend (Maricopa Co.) in early fall. With only about 10 prior records, an UPLAND SANDPIPER on the Santa Cruz Flats (Pinal Co.) was also an excellent “shorebird” discovery.

Tantalizing sightings of Mexican species occur every year, with highlights this season including the likely 3rd and 4th U.S. records, if accepted, of SINALOA WRENS at Tubac (Santa Cruz Co.) and Huachuca Canyon (Cochise Co.). A NUTTING'S FLYCATCHER was again detected at the Bill Williams River NWR (La Paz Co.). With only seven accepted state records and one pending record from earlier this year, a SLATE-THROATED RED-START in Huachuca Canyon was outstanding. Possibly becoming more regular, PLAIN-CAPPED STARthroats were photo-documented in three southeast counties. In addition to the well-known locations for RUFous-CAPPED WARBLERS in s.e.

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*Sinaloa Wren – September 2013, Cochise Co. –
Photo/Charles W. Melton*

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AZ, a likely family group was discovered at Hunter Canyon in the Huachuca Mtns. (Cochise Co.). Additional south of the border rarities included a YELLOW-GREEN VIREO in Montosa Canyon (Santa Cruz Co.) and a STREAK-BACKED ORIOLE in Cibola Valley (La Paz Co.).

Eastern and northern vagrants that always engender interest among state birders were detected as well. With fewer than 10 state records, a BLUE JAY found during an Important Bird Area survey near the San Rafael Valley (Santa Cruz Co.) was quite the surprise. Other highlights for the summer and fall included Yuma County's first WHITE-EYED VIREO and another at Flagstaff (Coconino Co.), a RED-EYED VIREO at Holbrook (Navajo Co.), a (RED) FOX SPARROW at Bagdad (Yavapai Co.), and an AMERICAN TREE SPARROW in Pasture Canyon (Coconino Co.). A first for Maricopa Co., a likely ALLEN'S HUMMINGBID was well photographed in Chandler.

With multi-year lapses between major irruptions, an invasion involving small to large flocks of CLARK'S NUTCRACKERS were detected near Prescott, Seligman, and several southeastern

mountain ranges. Other montane species which irregularly move into the lowlands of the state included LEWIS'S WOODPECKERS, WILLIAMSON'S SAPSUCKERS, and MOUNTAIN CHICKADEES at many locations.

Following the recent AOU split of Sage Sparrows into Sagebrush and Bell's Sparrows, birders are keeping vigilant watch to help better understand the winter distribution of Bell's Sparrows within AZ. So far this fall, birds identified as BELL'S SPARROWS have been reported from Parker (La Paz Co.) and areas west of Phoenix (Maricopa Co.). Only time and observations will tell how widespread this species may be within our state!



Blue-footed Booby – August 2013, Santa Cruz Co. - Photo/Terry Minks

For more details about these and other noteworthy photo-documented observations, please visit:
http://azfo.org/gallery/1main/photos_recent.html

SEVENTH ANNUAL AZFO MEETING

Sierra Vista, 4-6 October

By *Erika Wilson*

There was a good turnout for the Seventh Annual Meeting in Sierra Vista, with 62 people attending. Not surprisingly, people from the Phoenix Metro area, the Tucson Metro area, and Cochise County made up one quarter each of the participants, with the remainder coming from the northern and western parts of the state. Themed as "The Lesser Known Southeastern Arizona", Saturday's paper session and meeting was held in Cochise College's comfortable Student Union.

Pierre Deviche opened the paper session, announcing the 2013-14 Gale Monson Research Grants recipients. Janet Witzeman reported that 70+ copies of Counting Birds with Gale Monson have been sold and that efforts are being made to promote the book. The next presentation concerned heavy metals in Song Sparrows along the Santa Cruz River, work supported by a 2012-13 Gale Monson Research Grant. Other presentations focused on the spring migration of Common Black-Hawks up the Santa Cruz River; the effects of wildfires on Mexican Spotted Owls, especially in relation to nesting; and the role of birders in the Arizona IBA program.

A short business meeting followed, with an update on finances; the approval of changes to the AZFO by-laws; and the election of officers and board members. Troy Corman, president for the past eight

years, stepped down and Kurt Radamaker was elected AZFO President. Lauren Harter described a new AZFO Youth Scholarship Program, providing financial assistance for high school and undergraduate students to attend annual meetings. Throughout the day the popular tables with used books, AZFO logo items, and the Counting Birds with Gale Monson book did a brisk sales business. Participants were challenged by the photo quiz and the audio ID contests, and they bought raffle tickets for book prizes, including two books donated by the Tucson Audubon Society.



*Troy Corman - Sierra Vista Meeting –
Photo/John Yergler*



Used book/Logo Item tables – Photo/Doug Jenness



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(Red) Fox Sparrow – October 2013, Yavapai Co. –
Photo/Zach Smith



Barcha's Ranch, Brown Canyon –
Photo/Doug Jenness

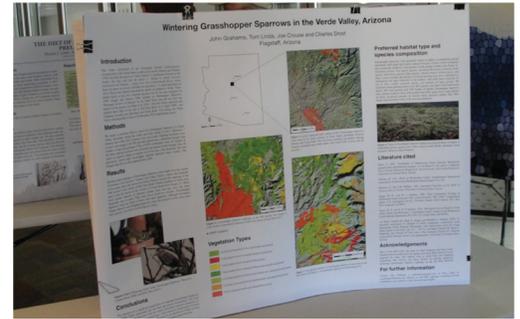
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The afternoon began with an Arizona Bird Committee report, followed by a summary of AZFO website usage, including the new Facebook page, which already has a good number of followers. Presentations on the under-birded San Bernardino Valley, in extreme southeast Arizona; on the effects of wildfires in different life zones on birds; and on the breeding of White-eared Hummingbirds in Miller Canyon were most interesting. Four poster presentations on Golden Eagle diets, the expansion of Tropical Kingbirds in Arizona, the distribution of wintering Grasshopper Sparrows in the Verde Valley, and an overview of Sonoran Desert breeding bird surveys drew folks to ask questions. There followed a report on future AZFO expeditions and workshops, and the answers, some quite surprising, to the photo and audio quizzes.

Troy Corman concluded the day's meeting by thanking John Yerger and Erika Wilson for making the arrangements in Sierra Vista and organizing the successful mini-field expeditions, Carol Beardmore and John Yerger for moderating the meeting, and the Cochise College staff for providing a fine venue and excellent services. He announced that the next state meeting will likely be in the general Phoenix area in October 2014.

The evening program began with Doug Jenness recalling the origins of AZFO, particularly the pivotal role played by Troy Corman, outgoing President. A handsome plaque was presented to Troy in appreciation of his continuing vision and dedication to making AZFO the organization it is today. John Yerger, noting that the federal government shutdown had forced Dr. Janet Ruth to cancel her keynote address, introduced Richard Webster, who had agreed on quite short notice to speak instead. His illustrated talk on hummingbirds, accompanied by stunning photographs, proved to be both entertaining and educational.



Poster session – Photo/Doug Jenness

MINI-EXPEDITIONS

At the 2013 Annual AZFO State Meeting

By *John Yerger*

Six different "mini" Field Expeditions were organized as part of the AZFO State Meeting in Sierra Vista this year. Three of these took place the day before the meeting, and three took place the day after. Brief summaries follow.

4 OCTOBER MINI-EXPEDITIONS:

In Hunter Canyon (Huachuca Mts), Michael Lester led a group of 14 birders who enjoyed a nice show of almost 100 White-throated Swifts acrobatically foraging overhead. All three jay species (Mexican, Western Scrub, and Steller's) demonstrated the diversity of the area, even amongst blackened oak trunks from the 2011 Monument Fire; lingering Hepatic Tanager and Scott's Oriole were also highlights. In French Joe Canyon (Whetstone Mts), Robert Weissler led a group of 10 into an area where Rufous-capped Warbler has been found in the past. While this rarity was not detected on the trip, an adult male Elegant Trogon was an excellent find, as the species is not typically detected in this mountain range and the timing seems to indicate a post-breeding wanderer. It's not often one can see trogons and Red-naped Sapsuckers together! Black-throated Gray and Townsend's Warblers were among migrants

detected. An excursion to the Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch led by Homer Hansen resulted in species typical of the San Rafael grasslands, and was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

6 OCTOBER MINI-EXPEDITIONS:

Robert Weissler also took a mini-Expedition with 14 folks into Scotia and Sunnyside Canyons, on the west side of the Huachuca Mountains. Although a female bear with two cubs was probably the highlight for everyone, the avian stars were Olive Warblers, Hepatic Tanager, and Arizona Woodpeckers along with a lingering young Scott's Oriole. A venture into Brown Canyon (east side, Huachuca Mts.) with Erika Wilson and 11 people yielded 35 species. Though the morning seemed relatively quiet, a late migrant Olive-sided Flycatcher was enjoyed by all. Finally, a slow stroll on private land along the San Pedro River south of Charleston Bridge resulted in several big surprises, including a male Painted Bunting and a female Green Kingfisher! A lingering Gray Hawk rounded out the morning.

Thanks to all mini-Expedition leaders and participants for adding to such a wonderful event!



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NOTES ON RECENT FIELD EXPEDITIONS

9-10 November 2013 – San Carlos Tribal Lands:

Doug Jenness organized this full-fledged Field Expedition with several teams to explore habitat along the lower San Carlos River and the adjacent San Carlos Reservoir. Highlights included some very rare birds: a probable Laughing Gull, White-winged Scoter, Surf Scoter, as well as other uncommon birds of interest such as Snow and Ross's Geese, 2 Merlins and 2 Bald Eagles. A full report will be available soon on the AZFO website.



Laughing Gull – October 2013, Maricopa Co. –
Photo/Bernard Howe

UPCOMING FIELD EXPEDITIONS AND WORKSHOPS

2013 - 2014

7 December 2013 - Pre-CBC Workshop - Tips for making a good day even better!

This workshop will review techniques and strategies that will help Christmas Bird Count participants and area leaders get the most out of their time in the field.

Tucson – Rich Hoyer leading workshop. Please register with John Yerger: john@adventurebirding.com; 520-558-0055

Phoenix – Troy Corman, aplomado@cox.net; 602-482-6187

Flagstaff - Zack Zdinak, wildlife@lifedraw.com; 928-774-4229

UPCOMING FIELD EXPEDITIONS (2014):

Detailed announcements will be sent to AZFO members about one month in advance of each Field Expedition and more details for each can be found on the Events page of our website. Here are brief summaries – mark your calendars now!

18 Jan 2014 – Santa Cruz Flats Raptor Count:

Annual survey to monitor winter populations of raptors in the Santa Cruz Flats, an important wintering ground for many species.

Coordinator: Doug Jenness (d_jenness@hotmail.com)

18 Jan 2014 - Greater Phoenix Area Waterbird Census:

Annual survey to monitor waterbird diversity and abundance in the many man-made waterholes of the greater Phoenix area, most of which are not covered on CBCs.

Coordinator: Troy Corman (aplomado@cox.net)

Early Feb 2014 (date TBD) – Western Arizona: Studying the Sage Sparrow Split

Chris McCreedy and Point Blue (formerly PRBO) are looking for volunteers to help with a project, sponsored in part by AZFO, that examines Sagebrush and Bell's Sparrow distribution and identification. The goal is to capture sparrows in Maricopa, Yuma, La Paz, and Mohave Counties. The schedule is still tentative as the team is waiting for permits, but the surveys should take place sometime between 5-16 Feb. Contact Chris at cmccreedy@pointblue.org for details.

29 March 2014 – Nest-searching for Crested Caracara:

In the Santa Cruz Flats, a follow-up to last year's Expedition. Attempting to document nesting range expansion northward. We'll need as many birders as possible to thoroughly cover this very large region. We're closer than ever to proving this breeding range expansion!

Leaders: Doug Jenness (d_jenness@hotmail.com) and Rich Glinski

For additional expedition and event details, please visit:
<http://azfo.org/events/custom/eventslist.html>

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