

WINGTIPS

A Publication of the Prescott Audubon Society

A Chapter of the National Audubon Society

December, 2015 & January, 2016

Non-threatening Compassion Offers Wonderful Wildlife Opportunities: pages 8-12



Activities & Announcements.....	1
Election Results.....	2
Thank You.	2
Mohave County Bird Sightings....	3-4
Important Bird Area Report.	4-5
Dreaming of Dippers.....	6-7
Gallery.	back cover



Prescott Audubon Society

The mission of Prescott Audubon Society is to preserve and protect our environment for all who inhabit it. The Society pursues these goals through education, field work, social activities, and activism.

Membership dues are \$20.00 per address. Click [here](#) to go to the Membership page of the PAS website. Otherwise, make a check out to Prescott Audubon Society and mail to:

Membership Chairperson Prescott Audubon Society, PO Box 4156, Prescott, AZ, 86302.

Dues may be paid at Chapter meetings as well.

Meetings

All are welcome to attend Prescott Audubon Society monthly meetings that take place, unless otherwise stated, on the 4th Thursday of each month, September through May, at 7 p.m. at the Trinity Presbyterian Church, on the NW corner of Park Avenue & Copper Basin Rd. (630 Park Avenue), Prescott, Arizona. The November & December meetings are combined with the date to be announced. The Board of Directors meets on the 4th Thursday of each month at the same location, at 5 p.m. Audubon members are always welcome to attend Board meetings.

Wingtips

Wingtips is published five times a year. Prescott Audubon Society members receive *Wingtips* by e-mail. Subscriptions for print copies are \$10.00 for five issues. Click [here](#) to go to the Membership page of the website to order a print subscription or send payment, name(s) and address to:

Wingtips Subscriptions
PO Box 4156
Prescott AZ 86302

Print subscriptions may also be paid for at Chapter meetings.

Submit items for publication in *Wingtips* any time; the deadline for the next issue is 5 p.m., Friday, 22nd January, 2016. Please send submissions to David Moll at: wingtips@cablone.net.

Photographs submitted for publication should be full size, unedited, files.

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Prescott Audubon Society
Website
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Field Trips

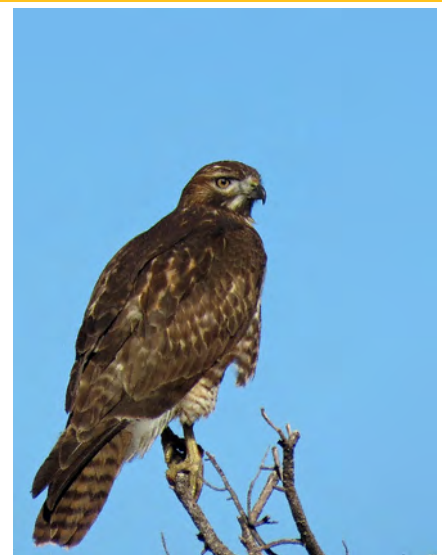
Please contact the trip leader to register for a particular trip. (This does not apply to bird walks at the Highlands Center for Natural History.) Weather, road or trail conditions may cause cancellations.

Field trip tips include:

- stay behind the leader
- wear neutral clothing
- bring water, food & sun screen
- avoid loud noises including slamming of car doors
- don't forget binoculars!

Participation in Prescott Audubon Society (PAS) field trips is voluntary; any injury or illness while on an outing is the responsibility of the participant. Food, drink and other items are not provided by PAS. Car pooling is done so fewer vehicles are driven. PAS assumes no liability for accidents, injuries, damage to vehicles or loss of property while on field trips. Suggested compensation for drivers of private vehicles is .20¢ per mile round trip, the total divided among the passengers. This compensation is meant to cover vehicle depreciation, routine maintenance, as well as gasoline.

Cover



Red-tailed Hawk Posing Near Mint Wash by Toni Kaus

Activities & Announcements



DECEMBER

Thursday, 3rd: Potluck and Awards Dinner. 5 p.m.: set-up, 6 p.m.: dinner, 7 p.m.: volunteer awards. Master of Ceremony: Professor Carl Tomoff, Founding President Prescott Audubon Society. Trinity Presbyterian Church, on the NW corner of Park Avenue & Copper Basin Rd. (630 Park Avenue).

Wednesday, 16th: Prescott Christmas Bird Count. Contact Carl Tomoff (928-778-2626, tomoff@northlink.com) for information and to participate.

Monday, 21st: Chino Valley Christmas Bird Count. Contact Russell Duerksen (928-925-5567, duerksen@msn.com) for information and to participate.

Monday, 28th: The Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count. Contact Kathleen Blair (928-667-4144, kathleen_blair@fws.gov) for information and to participate.

Tuesday, 29th: Havasu National Wildlife Refuge Christmas Bird Count. Contact DeeDee DeLorenzo (928-758-2707, deeedelorenzo@yahoo.com) for information and to participate.

JANUARY

Friday, 1st, 9 a.m. – 12 noon: New Year's Day Field Trip. Start your 2016 bird list off in good company! We will select the best spots to bird around Prescott. Call Sue Drown at (928) 227-3720 to register for details on where to meet. Happy New Year!

Monday, 11th through Friday, 15th, 2016: Albuquerque & Bosque del Apache, New Mexico, a few spaces still available. This trip will be a quest for Rosy Finches at Sandia Crest outside of Albuquerque and

for thousands of Sandhill Cranes, Snow Geese, and more at the best winter bird site in the region, Bosque del Apache. We will be carpooling from Prescott and staying in hotels. For details, see the article in the October issue of *Wingtips*. Call Karen O'Neil at (928) 778-3018 to register.

13th – 17th: Wings Over Willcox. [Website](#).

Thursday, 28th, 5 p.m.: Board of Directors Meeting; 7 p.m.: Chapter Meeting: "2015 Amazon Field Trip Highlights" with Micah Riegner. Trinity Presbyterian Church, on the NW corner of Park Avenue & Copper Basin Rd. (630 Park Avenue).

FEBRUARY

Saturday, 13th, 9 a.m.: Highlands Center Bird Walk. For our monthly Highlands Center for Natural History bird walks, meet Nancy McMahon & Kathy Wingert in the [Highlands Center parking lot](#), 1375 S Walker Rd., Prescott. Access is easy and all are welcome.

Thursday, 25th, 5 p.m.: Board of Directors Meeting; 7 p.m.: Chapter Meeting: "Tanzania" with Professor Walt Anderson. Trinity Presbyterian Church, on the NW corner of Park Avenue & Copper Basin Rd. (630 Park Avenue).

MARCH

3rd – 6th: San Diego Bird Festival. <http://www.sandiegoaudubon.org/events/bird-festival>

Saturday, 12th, 8:30 a.m.: Highlands Center Bird Walk. For our monthly Highlands Center for Natural History bird walks, meet Nancy McMahon & Kathy Wingert in the [Highlands Center parking lot](#), 1375 S Walker Rd., Prescott. Access is easy and all are welcome. 🐦

Results of the Board of Directors Election

There was a show-of-hands vote at the September 24 Chapter Meeting. By a majority of votes received:

- Felipe Guerrero was elected as our newest director
- Sue Drown was re-elected as President.
- Doug Iverson was re-elected as Secretary.
- Laura Rhoden was re-elected as Treasurer.

All terms are for two years. 🐦



PAS Thanks to New, Renewing and Contributing Members

Thank you all for your response to our 2015-2016 membership renewal season, and welcome to our new members!

Your support is so very much appreciated. In *Wingtips*, we thank those who contribute, but there are also folks who wish to remain anonymous and we hope that they know that these thanks go to them as well. We at Prescott Audubon are very appreciative of all the contributions of our kind members whether financial or in gifts of time — thank you all! We are pleased to recognize our recent contributors:

Education: Kati Anderson, Penny & Stephen Govedich, and Beverly Womack.

General Fund: Richard & Stella Gage, Natalie Houghton, Karen O'Neil, Jan & Ronald Parrott, Carol & Donn Rawlings, Tom & Linda Turner, and Chas & Crystal Wical.

Many thanks, too, to Carol Schooler for all of her work to get Audubon Adventures into classrooms. 🐦

If you shop with Amazon, go through the AmazonSmile link - another easy way to donate to Prescott Audubon

When you shop at AmazonSmile, you can have a portion of each eligible Amazon purchase donated to our chapter. Simply go to www.smile.amazon.com and designate Prescott Audubon Society as your charity of choice. For eligible purchases at AmazonSmile, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the purchase price to PAS. Same Amazon prices, same shopping experience, but you can support PAS with each purchase when you shop through the AmazonSmile site!



If you have any questions, please contact Laura Rhoden at treasurer@prescottaudubon.org or (928) 776-4514.

Mohave County Bird Sightings: Late September-November 2015

Compiled by DeeDee DeLorenzo

All sightings in this report are tentative as they have not been confirmed except by the individual reporting them to DeeDee DeLorenzo. Report Mohave County sightings to DeeDee DeLorenzo at (928) 758-2702 or deedeedelorenzo@yahoo.com

Abbreviations: Arizona Bird Committee (ABC); Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas (Atlas); Bill Williams River National Wildlife Refuge (BWRNWR); Havasu National Wildlife Refuge (HNWR); Bullhead City (BHC); Lake Havasu City (LHC); Lake Havasu (L. Havasu); Lake Mohave (L. Mohave); Lower Colorado River Valley (LCRV)

An early **American Goldfinch** was found at Beal Lake, HNWR, by Lauren Harter and David Vander Pluym 23 September. This species is an uncommon winter resident in the LCRV between mid-October and mid-April.

A **Painted Bunting** was discovered 30 September in Rotary Park, LHC, by Lauren Harter. It was feeding with a Lazuli Bunting, an Indigo Bunting, and a small flock of sparrows. A casual visitor, Painted Buntings wander westward in the fall to southern Arizona and on occasion to southern California.

Typically, the first goose to arrive in the LCRV during fall migration is the **Greater White-fronted Goose**. This species is a common migrant during late September and early October so the three individuals spotted by David Vander Pluym at the north end of L. Havasu, 10 September were a bit early. Later in the month and more on schedule, a flock of 33 showed up on the Bill Williams River Delta 30 September as reported by Kathleen Blair, BWRNWR ecologist.

Glenn Klingler had an **Inca Dove** at his feeder in Havasu Heights 1 October. This species was not reported in Arizona before 1870, but was found breeding near Tucson and Tubac in 1872. Since then the Inca Dove population has expanded as more towns and cities have been established and grown. The Inca Dove has become a fairly common local resident in Parker and Bullhead City (Atlas).

A male **Lawrence's Goldfinch** showed up 2 October at Glenn Klingler's home feeder in Havasu Heights, and a female joined him 4-5 October. David Vander Pluym reported a Lawrence's Goldfinch at Site 6, L. Havasu 8 November. This bird is an unpredictable and uncommon fall/winter visitor to Arizona.

A rare but regular fall transient from mid-September to mid-October one **Sabine's Gull** was observed on L. Havasu 3 October by David Vander Pluym and Lauren Harter. John West also reported a Sabine's Gull, perhaps the same individual, 7 October near N. Pittsburgh Point, L. Havasu.

A **Grasshopper Sparrow** was discovered at Rotary Park, LHC, 22 September by David Vander Pluym. Possibly the same sparrow was seen again in the same area 3 October by Vander Pluym and Lauren Harter. There are few records of Grasshopper Sparrows in Mohave County. Of course, part of this may be because this species tends to be inconspicuous and easily overlooked.

A very unlikely sighting was that of a **Prothonotary Warbler** 6-9 October in DeeDee DeLorenzo's yard, in BHC. Although widespread in the eastern part of the country, this species is rare west of the Mississippi River with few reported sightings in the LCRV.

The **Cassin's Finch** can be found at high elevations in the northern parts of Mohave County, so a male at a feeder in Glenn Klingler's yard in Havasu Heights the morning of 7 October is noteworthy.

A rare and irregular fall visitor to the LCRV, a male **Evening Grosbeak** was discovered bathing in a birdbath in the front yard of DeeDee DeLorenzo in BHC, the afternoon of 9 October. A report of an Evening Grosbeak at Rotary Park, LHC, 29 October was made by David Vander Pluym.

Chris McCreedy spotted the continuing **Clay-colored Sparrow** at Rotary Park, LHC, 11 October. This sparrow is a casual fall transient and is often seen with other sparrow species.

A rare **Purple Finch** was found at Rotary Park, LHC, 19 October by David Vander Pluym. He reported two in the same vicinity 1 November. Lauren Harter heard and then located a Purple Finch 26 October at Old South Dike, HNWR. This is a rare, irregular fall and winter visitor to the LCRV with sightings occurring between late October and March.

An **Eastern Phoebe** was discovered at Rotary Park, LHC, 19 October by David Vander Pluym. A regular transient and winter visitor from November through late March, this species' appearance in the Southwest seems to be increasing (Rosenberg, et al. 1991).

Lauren Harter found a **Black-and-White Warbler** 20 October in Rotary Park, LHC. Although this species can be found between early September and late May in the LCRV, it is a rare but regular migrant and winter visitor.

Michelle Brock reported a **Clark's Nutcracker** 4 November at Shaffer Springs, Oatman Hwy, Golden Valley. Clark's Nutcrackers are typically found in high-elevation mountain ranges of western North America, but have been known to appear at lower elevations in fall and winter (Atlas).

The **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** has been rarely reported in Arizona because it is so similar to the Red-naped Sapsucker which is more common. However, David Vander Pluym identified one at New South Dike, HNWR 18 November.

Although there are a few late fall and winter records of **Lesser Nighthawks** in the LCRV, most nighthawks have left by the end of October. The report by Helen Howard of two flying around the lights at the Luv's Truck Stop near Exit 7 on I-40, 22 November is noteworthy. 🐦

Important Bird Area Update

By Karen O'Neil, PAS IBA Coordinator

The final IBA survey of 2015 was conducted in Watson Woods on September 13th. Turkey Vultures and raptors were common including Cooper's Hawk, one adult Common Black Hawk, Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels. A little surprisingly, a Cooper's Hawk and a Red-tailed Hawk were perched on the same snag. Anna's Hummingbirds were abundant (22) and a few Black-chinned Hummingbirds lingered. Both Green Heron and Belted Kingfisher were spotted at the wildlife pond at the north end of Watson Woods. Several migrating species were noted including Western Wood-Pewee, Cassin's Vireo (and an unidentified Vireo), Nashville Warbler,

Common Yellowthroat, Yellow Warbler, Western Tanager, and Lazuli Bunting. Still hanging out in the Woods were several Violet-Green Swallows (9), Blue Grosbeaks (10) and Summer Tanagers (7). A Lincoln's Sparrow was also found. Would it stay, or was it migrating through?

IBA surveys will begin again in spring 2016, and winter of 2016 means that the time will have again come to survey the wintering water birds on Watson and Willow Lakes. The dates of the surveys for 2016 have been established, so please *mark your calendars!!* They are:

Upper Verde	Watson Woods	Lakes
April 27th	May 1st	December 4th
May 11th	May 15th	January 8, 2017
September 7th	August 21st	February 5, 2017
Yellow-billed Cuckoo Surveys: TBD	September 11th	March 5, 2017

I also learned — almost by accident — that, particularly along the Middle Verde River (from Clarkdale through Camp Verde), there are numerous monitoring projects underway. There are a few projects along the Upper Verde

River. Some projects have been going on for decades, some for a relatively short time. The Friends of the Verde Greenway in conjunction with the Tamarisk Coalition decided that it might be helpful to invite a representative for

a day from as many groups as they could find to educate each other as to what kinds of monitoring is actually going on along the Verde River. The result was a one-day "Monitoring Summit" held at the Cliff Castle Casino Hotel in Camp Verde on November 5th, 2015. I was asked to give a brief presentation about Prescott Audubon's avian surveys in the Upper Verde River Wildlife Management Area.

Here are some of the efforts (in addition to our IBA surveys) that are currently ongoing. 1) As part of the General Agreement in Principle between Prescott Valley, Prescott and Salt River Project, there is an on-going "Hydrologic Monitoring Program in the Big Chino Sub-basin". This monitoring is planned to continue until 2020, at which time a final report will be submitted. The purpose of the monitoring is to mitigate impacts to Upper Verde Springs before impacts occur. A full report of monitoring to date can be found on the City of Prescott website. 2) The Nature Conservancy (TNC) has been monitoring Verde River flow rates for several decades from the Upper Verde to Bartlett Dam. These results are on the TNC website. Additionally Sierra Club has water quality and flow data on its website for the Upper Verde River. 3) The Yavapai-Apache Nation in the Middle Verde River area (the Nation has four different properties in this area, it is a distinct Nation from the Yavapai Nation around Prescott) has a relatively new monitoring project. All its data is reported to the EPA which is funding the Nation's monitoring efforts. The Nation is monitoring water quality, and it is taking action to reduce nonpoint source contaminants through several work projects. These include removal of invasive species, restoration of original natural habitat, fencing to keep livestock out of the Verde River, and macroinvertebrate sampling.

4) Jason Jones from Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) reported that ADEQ receives monitoring funds from EPA under the Clean Water Act. Mr. Jones reported that contaminated water causes more worldwide deaths than all forms of violent deaths combined!! Annually, 1.8 million children under the age of 5 years die from contaminated water! ADEQ (or the organizations they fund via grants) do water quality monitoring, assessment, source (of contamination) identification, and restoration. 5) The Friends of the Verde River Greenway/Verde Watershed Restoration Coalition with lots of help from the Arizona

Conservation Corps monitor and manage invasive plants along the Middle Verde River.

6) The Arizona Game & Fish Department monitor both Fisheries and Bald Eagles along both the Upper Verde and the Middle Verde. Much of the Bald Eagle monitoring is done by volunteers who annually monitor nests and nestlings through fledging. Whenever feasible, the AGFD bands nestlings. Dave Weedman, the Fisheries person for the department reported that in 2013 (the last time the fish in the Upper Verde were surveyed), there were NO Threatened or Endangered fish in the Upper Verde River. Dave also reported to me personally when speaking to him at lunch that base flows in the Upper Verde River are down to 13-14 CFS (cubic feet/second) from 19-20 CFS when the application for the Wildlife Management Area was submitted to the Heritage Fund to purchase the area (somewhere between 2000-2003). Dave attributes the reduction in base flow to ground water pumping. There are no regulations that I am aware of in Arizona to manage ground water pumping.

7) The Oak Creek Watershed Council does water quality monitoring in Oak Creek, and the Council has two grants from ADEQ to develop green infrastructure in Sedona (I believe) to prevent/reduce contaminants that might go into Oak Creek. These projects are similar to the two that have already occurred in Prescott. 8) Charlotte Minor of the Coconino National Forest (CNF) reported on monitoring efforts to measure recreational impacts on Fossil Creek. The CNF estimates that the area, which was designated Wild & Scenic in 2009, has 100,000 visitors per summer! This is also a relatively new effort, so she was not ready to report results. The values that are important for the Creek and which contributed to its Wild & Scenic designation, are (in no particular order) recreation, geology (travertine), wildlife, and historical/cultural sites and artifacts.

The bottom line of this "summit" for me, was something we all know: water in Arizona is more precious and in higher demand than gold! The biggest hole in the regulatory process is the lack of oversight on private property wells that drill from various aquifers around the state, and impact surface water flows — a fact that is totally disregarded in all regulatory efforts! 🍷

Dreaming of Dippers

By Laura Rhoden & Cathy LeVine

Destination: Cave Springs Campground, Oak Creek Canyon

Mission: To observe an American Dipper

On November 20th, three of us left at the crack of dawn (well, maybe a little after) to see if we could find an American Dipper in Oak Creek Canyon. There had been an eBird report of one at Cave Springs Campground, about 13 miles north of Sedona, on November 11th.

But why go all the way to Coconino County? After all, one was seen around the Granite Creek bridge near the old Granite Dells resort. Oh wait: that was in March 2008.



American Dipper, 2015-11-20, Oak Creek Photograph by Laura Rhoden.

The Cornell Lab of Ornithology's All About Birds website provides this (paraphrased) information about the American Dipper:

A denizen of western streams, the American Dipper is North America's only truly aquatic songbird. It catches all of its food (aquatic insects and their larvae) underwater in swiftly flowing streams by swimming and walking on the stream bottom.

It is a stocky, medium-sized bird, gray all over. It has a large head, short neck, long legs and a short tail. It constantly bobs its body up and down. The dipper is generally a solitary bird.

(https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/American_Dipper/lifehistory for more details.)

It should also be said that they are fascinating and fun to watch as they duck in and out of said swiftly flowing streams, searching for their dinner.

It was still chilly when we arrived. Our first bird was a handsome Common Raven, who entertained us with

interesting raven croaks as it surveyed the parking lot. In our eagerness to find the dipper, we took a path directly to the creek, bypassing the road to the closed campground. Red-naped Sapsucker was our next bird, followed by Northern Flicker and White-breasted Nuthatch. We heard a descending rasp reminiscent of a Canyon Wren with a sore throat, and then we saw a russet wren on the hillside across the creek, bobbing on a boulder. It produced its signature cascading song, dispelling any doubts.

We walked downstream along Oak Creek, carefully eyeing each set of riffles: "If I were a dipper, this is where I'd hang out!", but to no avail. Then we were distracted by a flurry of activity in a mixed grove of trees: chattering and high-pitched calls promised — and delivered — both Ruby-crowned and Golden-crowned Kinglets. Brown Creepers demanded our attention as well; we counted at least five during our visit. One even appeared low on a tree just a few feet away for a great study.

We had almost reached the end of the campground when we spied a perfect log to sit on while we snacked (a key part of any birding trip!). As we discussed what a magical day it had been so far, even without a dipper, one of us caught a glimpse of a gray blur zooming straight up the creek, just above the water.

"That's it!" we cried and, half-eaten snacks in hand, we hot-footed it upstream. About five minutes later, we saw its unmistakable silhouette on a rock below us.

The dipper, constantly bobbing as its name suggests, demonstrated an extensive repertoire of feeding behaviors. Most often it stood mid-stream and ducked its head

underwater. As it raised its head, water sheeted off its feathers like splashes of molten silver. Sometimes it would completely submerge, diving in and appearing to flap its wings to propel itself downward. At other times, it stood with outstretched wings as if stabilizing itself in the current. Occasionally it floated and spun with the current, intentionally or otherwise, for a short distance. Regardless of its approach — from a rock, mid-stream, or underwater — the dipper usually came up with some little tidbit to eat. It stayed in one area for several minutes, with an occasional short swim, slide, or hop to work a nearby section. At last, it took off for points further upstream, and we wandered off to picnic in the sunny meadow near the campground entrance.

It was both a wonderful day and a day full of wonders. We had the splendor of Oak Creek Canyon in its fall colors almost all to ourselves in quite pleasant weather (except for

a moment or two in the shade early on). We had record numbers of Brown Creepers, good looks at Golden-crowned Kinglets that didn't involve neck injuries, the dancing Canyon Wren, and the extended encounter with the American Dipper showing us so many nuances of its foraging techniques. Almost any day out birding is a good day, but this one was particularly delightful. As we headed back to Prescott, we began to dream: "What discoveries might other seasons bring at this beautiful place?"



Afterword:

In one of those odd coincidences, a recent email from WRAN (Western Rivers Action Network) had this news: Announcing the winner of our Favorite Colorado River Bird competition...and the prize goes to the beloved American Dipper. 🐾



American Dipper, 2015-11-20, Oak Creek. Photograph by Laura Rhoden.

Non-threatening Compassion Offers Wonderful Wildlife Opportunities

Text & Photographs by Stephen Bruno

stephenbrunophotography.com

Excerpted from the upcoming (2016) book, *Curious Naturalist: The Art & Essence of Wildlife Photography*

I am frequently asked about my wildlife photography philosophy and approach, especially when I teach workshops and classes for the Prescott Audubon Society and the Northern Arizona Audubon Society. I share how it is possible to photograph wildlife with wonderful results without being intrusive to the birds, animals and critters.

Over my more than 45 years of wildlife photography in numerous locations including mountains, deserts, lakes, rivers, oceans, cities, towns and islands, I have become by inclination and necessity a compassionate curious naturalist. Early on, I learned the value of embracing each encounter with wildlife as an essence-to-essence connection rather than simply observer and subject. I know that wildlife responds rather than reacts to this quality of interaction. This results in amazing photography and heart-to-heart connections without interfering with their well-being, or mine.

I have had the pleasure of countless experiences where my non-threatening compassion, behavior and attitude made all the difference with my experience sharing time with diverse wildlife.

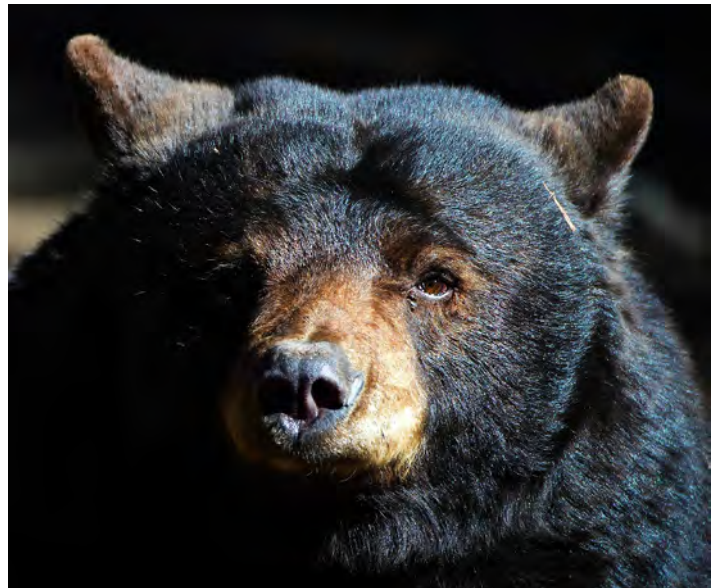
Below are just two of many memorable experiences:

Black Bear Family — Yosemite National Park, California

At age of seven or eight, I experienced my first close encounter with bears in the wild, in Yosemite National Park, California. One early morning, I hiked away from my single-parent family's canvas tent cabin at the Curry Village campground and walked down toward one of the many cold, rapid-moving rivers in the beautiful valley. After several timeless hours, I became lost in the splendor of the Giant Sequoia trees and the lush green meadows in the valley floor.

I can easily recall when one adult female Black Bear (actually more cinnamon), weighing about 150 pounds and three feet high at the withers, casually strolled by me with

three one-to-two-year-old cubs when I wandered off the path. I was so captivated that I completely forgot about being lost. The bears were curious and friendly, and remained comfortable in my presence. The cubs did a lot of sniffing all around me. It never occurred to me to be concerned about my safety, or theirs. Therefore, I naturally demonstrated a non-threatening behavior and attitude. I maintained a normal expression on my face and talked softly. I kept my eyes toward the mother bear who seemed to look me over carefully.



Black Bear, February 13, 2015, Bearizona, Williams, Arizona.

I talked quietly to each of the bears, watching their expressions as they responded with grunts. Once the mother bear seemed to feel I was not a threat she led her family along a well-worn path. With excitement and curiosity, I followed them at a discreet distance. I watched the frequent Gray Squirrels running about and the occasional Mule Deer roaming near the riverbed of the roaring Merced River. We passed through countless blooming flowers and tall green grass.

I watched as the cubs sometimes were wrestling, falling, and nipping each other. They were very playful and seemed equally accepting about this small skinny being now included

in their family. When the bears ate huckleberries, blueberries or other berries, I ate berries. When they rested, I rested. When they looked for other areas to forage at wet meadows along creeks and river, I walked along with them. I knew that the mother bear accepted me when, if I was too slow she gave that impatient look and grunted and then briefly chomped teeth or lips until I caught up.

While the mother bear ripped into rotting fallen logs with her claws grubbing ants and beetle larvae, I quenched my thirst at the creek or river. She also ate grasses and pine nuts. It all felt so natural to share this time with the bear family and I never felt threatened.

This was a time when the Yosemite rangers still encouraged contact with the bears, including feeding them. In fact, the National Park Service maintained several "bear pits" in the park where bears were fed garbage in an attempt to keep them out of park campgrounds and lodging areas, and to provide visitor entertainment.

I was fortunate that as darkness was settling in the moonlit valley their foray took us all back to the meadow near Curry Village where I could see the evening campfires and hear distant voices. Was it by accident or intention that the mother bear led me back to where I began my adventure? With a sideways glance from the mother bear and a soft grunt, my adoptive bear family swiftly climbed the crest of the hill we had just descended and they disappeared over the horizon.

Early the next morning, I found them at the meadow near Curry Village. Once again, I fell in line with my adoptive bear family and followed them as they were shredding and taking apart decaying snags and downed logs in order to reach insects. They found and ate grasses and berries. The mom had a deliberate, slow walk, sometimes punctuated with pauses during which she stood on her hind limbs to get more information from her senses of smell, sight and hearing. I tried to stand taller but could not see much.

Again, just prior to nightfall, I was led back to the meadow near Curry Village. The cubs scurried around me sometimes knocking me down on the incline in their rough play. I remember giggling and laughing out loud. Then, the

mother bear grunted and the cubs scampered up the hill to her side. After what felt like several minutes of looking into each others' eyes, she grunted, turned and my adoptive bear family slowly reached the crest of the hill and with a quick glance from all three bears, they descended the other side.

Thus began my lifelong affinity with wildlife, Black Bears in particular, and nature in general.

Many people are moving into Black Bear habitat. The bears' future depends on how well we all understand and interact with them. Once the bears become overly habituated or begin to be seen as a threat, they may be unnecessarily relocated or even killed by the wildlife authorities.

Movies and articles have unfortunately given Black Bears an unrealistically ferocious image, causing people to fear them excessively and kill them unnecessarily. I believe that one of the greatest misconceptions about Black Bears is that they are likely to attack people in defense of cubs. They are highly unlikely to do this. Research demonstrates that Black Bears are frequently captured with screaming cubs, resulting in only bluff-charging mothers and no attacks.

Mountain Lion Family — Lake Powell, Arizona

One summer during a spiritual and personal growth houseboat retreat, I was teaching at Lake Powell, Page, Arizona. I anchored the 50-foot houseboat near a sandy beach of an isolated cove. Our group of 16 participants observed one very large pair of Mountain Lion paw prints about 4 inches wide. This is about the width of an adult human hand. There were also two sets of small kitten prints imbedded in the soft wet sand.

In the late afternoon, I was jogging alone at the top of a steep cliff and as I rounded a curve, I saw a large 100lb female Mountain Lion sitting at the top off a bluff. Her torso was a cinnamon buff-colored contrasted by a white belly. She had two kittens with brownish-black irregular spots on their bodies and dark rings on their short tails.

I had read that they can jump as far as 40 feet in one leap and as high as 15 feet from the ground. I was only about 45 feet away below her. I figured one leap would bring us together.

I slowed to a fast walk and decided to pass in front rather than turning around as she maintained attentive eye contact. I did not know if I could continue around the bluff or would have to return the way that I came. I had not yet read that it was not wise to maintain eye contact with a Mountain Lion. I talked calmly and softly to her and behaved as non-threatening as I could. I became as tall as possible while moving.

Then, one eager kitten began bounding down the hill toward me as the other kitten

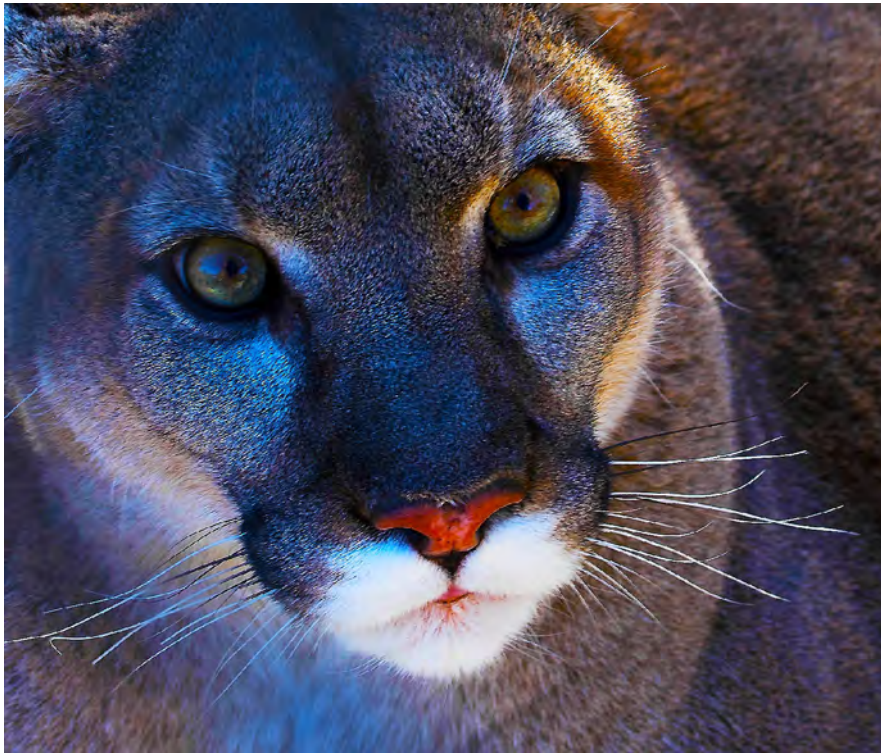
cautiously moved near the mom. Without losing eye contact with me, the momma Mountain Lion crouched and gave a single loud, blood-curdling hair-raising cry that sounded like a woman screaming in pain. The kitten continued toward me with an over-the-shoulders look at mom. She then reluctantly turned around about 15 feet from me, and scampered back up the hill. The

magnificent mother Mountain Lion cried a soft whistle and gently lay down as I moved safely out of sight and continued on a path that fortunately led down the other side of the cliff to the houseboat.

I will never forget that experience and the eye-to-eye connection we shared.

During my long jogs, deep in the Arizona forests, I occasionally observed Mountain Lions watching from large boulders high above me, and no more than 100 feet away. Each time I calmly connected eye-to-eye with the Mountain Lion and slowed to a brisk walk, and spoke softly to them, which appeared to resolve any conflict.

After years of wildlife photography (unfortunately no Mountain Lion photographs in the wild), it may be the naturalist in me that is moved to establish a visual connection and softly talk to them as I make my way through their territory. Perhaps, the advice not to engage in direct eye contact with a Mountain Lion is an appropriate behavior and I support this if intuitively it makes sense. Nonetheless, I believe that a responsible, aware, non-threatening, compassionate connection with our animal neighbors is wise whenever possible.



Male Mountain Lion, November 11, 2014, Heritage Park Zoological Sanctuary, Prescott, Arizona

Each year, sport hunters, farmers and vehicle accidents kill Mountain Lions. Several months ago a hit-and-run driver killed a young Mountain Lion on a main highway in Prescott, Arizona, not far from Lynx Lake where I frequently hike and photograph. The effects of habitat loss are dramatic for increasing more opportunities for Mountain Lion and human encounters.

My Wildlife Photography Philosophy

I believe that artists, writers, photographers and birders are vigilant observers by inclination, background, and training. My life, which includes each of these professions, serves me well in developing and enhancing intuition, observational skills, focus, natural instinct, dedication, curiosity, compassion, and patience. People tell me that I photograph with an artist's eye. I believe that it really comes from my naturalist's heart.

I learn everything that I can about the wildlife I photograph. It is essential to know their life cycles, patterns and behavior. I can then almost predict exactly where the best location is to observe and photograph. For example, I know that dragonflies will continue to land on the same

object numerous times. Additionally, this allows me the opportunity to know how and when not to disturb them.

I learned that once Osprey catch fish, they turn it so that the fishes' face is forward to make it aerodynamic, and that they must turn into the wind to get greater lift from the water with the extra weight of the fish. I positioned myself where they would be flying towards me into the wind and building up their lift, which gives me many photographic opportunities. Learning about wildlife results in better photographs and a greater understanding of the wildlife I observe.

My Approach to Non-Threatening, Compassionate Wildlife Photography

I deeply believe that the compassionate connection with wildlife *is* the essence of the experience. The great photograph is simply a bonus. I also strongly believe in observing and photographing wildlife, large and small, without disturbing it in any way. If wildlife changes its behavior even subtly, because of my presence, then I am too close and doing something intrusive. I'm not too shy to appropriately encourage others to consider this when I observe their behavior adversely affecting wildlife.

Below are a few approaches I follow to embrace and photograph wildlife without causing them alarm:

- I realize that frequently wildlife know I am present before I observe them under most circumstances. I want to be experienced as a non-threatening being whenever possible. I dress in layers of earth tone camouflage that helps me to remain unnecessarily visible. I usually wear a tan photographer's vest, light-colored or dark-colored jeans and either a green camouflage hat or ball cap depending on the season. I prefer some skin exposure to sense the weather and wildlife in my environment



Female Great-tailed Grackle, April 4, 2015 Cottonwood, Arizona

- Something I learned while serving in the U.S. Army in Vietnam, is avoiding using scented soap, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, toothpaste, perfumes, after-shaves, mouth wash, etc. Of course one can take a shower or bath with Baking Soda mixed with liquid no-scent soap to eliminate body scent. Hydrogen Peroxide and distilled water wash also works well. Although these extra measures are not necessary for casual photography, I do think they can be important if I want some serious photographs of wildlife.

- I avoid filling up my vehicle with gas while in route to where I'll be photographing to avoid gasoline odors which could potentially linger on my hands, clothing, hair or skin.

- I avoid touching and leaving my scent on branches and trees. Sometime I walk in shallow water or mud to remove my shoes and boots of odor. To keep my breath fresh, I swish with hydrogen peroxide.

- Especially when I am photographing, I avoid detergents that add fragrances that are not found in nature.

- A Native American approach that I learned is crushing fragrant plants, evergreen needles, pine cones or whatever is natural to the area, and rubbing them on my clothes and some of my exposed skin.

- I always follow my intuition. If the hair on the back of my neck stands up, I usually find wildlife. Particularly predators! There is a "knowing" that guides me to learn when wildlife is present. And sometimes, if it

predator or prey, I have learned to stop, be as quiet as possible and use all my senses until I can identify where the wildlife is located. This is especially wise when large predators are in the area.

- Wildlife usually has better senses to know that I am there sooner than my ability to be certain that they are nearby. Therefore, I approach wildlife with the wind in my face. I walk from tree stands downwind from wildlife trails. If the wind is not perfect, I choose another location to avoid making the wildlife uneasy.
 - I try to not silhouette myself against any light background. This is especially important if I have the sun behind me. Additionally, I try to keep low to the ground. I crouch behind boulders or vegetation to break up my outline. Although not always convenient, it is essential to blend into the environment when I want to get close to wildlife.
 - I found that by walking with a slow fluid motion and swaying like the movement and direction of the wind, I blend in and attract less attention especially from small birds. The more that I can be in harmony with nature, the greater opportunity for an essence-to-essence connection with the wonders of wildlife.
 - Our society tends to promote whiter teeth. However, I know that when I close my mouth I can eliminate any teeth shine from the sun or even a full moon that unnecessarily alerts wildlife. When appropriate, I want wildlife to know that I am present when I am ready to photograph.
 - I remember to relax all of my muscles since I believe that wildlife easily detects this tension. I believe this helps if confronted by a predator like a Mountain Lion or a Black Bear. This will definitely help in your photography as well.
 - I shift between my vision, hearing, smell, touch and taste while remaining motionless. This brings many opportunities including a direction to quietly follow. I do not practice sneaking up on wildlife, rather, I gradually embrace them with my presence. This allows them time to respond rather than react out of a need to protect themselves.
 - I smell the area around me. I know that most animals carry a specific odor and while it will vary by animal, its scent can often be more pungent than the vegetation around me. This definitely is true of bears. Often I have known bears were nearby by their scent.
 - Frequently, by sitting still and quiet with a compassionate state of mind, wildlife will come to me and when they sense enough security they continue their behavior, surprisingly near me. I sometimes turn off or reduce the sound of clicking the camera if the wildlife is especially wary.
 - I never feed animals or leave behind food scraps. I do know there are some wildlife photographers that use this food as bait to photograph wildlife. However, I know that it does not take long for animals to become habituated to human food. The repercussions are all destructive.
 - I learned patterns of animal behavior so as not to interfere with their life cycles. This also proved the best times to observe and photograph them. I have found that placing and keeping my camera and lens directly in front of my eyes will bring me much closer to wildlife than watching them and then, pulling my camera up to my eyes which can startle them. This works wonderfully with Bald Eagles, Osprey, Great Blue Herons, Great Horned Owls and many more.
 - I respect the routine needs of all wildlife large and small including hunting, fishing, nesting and nurturing their young ones. I do not approach nesting areas. I use a telephoto lens or simply observe from a distance then quickly leave the area.
 - Great Blue Herons are very patient and effective in their fishing. I know when they are close to striking, and how they toss the prey just before swallowing it. I'm aware that any intrusion causes them to relocate and start over fishing in a new location. With all wildlife like the beautiful Great Blue Heron, I know that their acquiring a meal is a life-and-death process and each attempt is significant. I make sure that my presence does not interfere with their behavior.
 - I avoid impacting the fragility of the ecosystem within the wildlife habitat. I do my best to remain on trails to lessen impact. When I rarely decide to 'bushwhack' I consider all of this.
- Be present and pay close attention while you are practicing these methods to observe and photograph wildlife. Some wildlife just may be observing you! 🐾



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An Easy Way to Donate: Link your Fry's V.I.P. Card to Prescott Audubon

If you have a Fry's V.I.P. card, you can link it to Prescott Audubon: every time you shop at Fry's using your V.I.P. Card, Fry's will donate to us. It costs you nothing except a few minutes to set up the link.

Please note that to link your Fry's V.I.P. card to PAS, you must have an email address and have created an online account for your V.I.P. card using that email address as your Fry's login ID. You will create a unique password for your Fry's account, separate from your email password.

To link your V.I.P. card to Prescott Audubon:

1. Either start at the main Fry's screen (www.frysfood.com) and click on "Community" in the top menu, or go directly to www.FrysCommunityRewards.com.
2. Click on "Sign In" (upper right corner) and enter your email and Fry's password.
3. Click on "My Account" (upper right corner).
4. Scroll down to the Community Rewards section, and click on "Edit".
5. In the Search Box on the "Find your Organization" page, type either "Prescott Audubon" or our number "37295", and click "Search".
6. In the results area, click on the circle to the left of Prescott Audubon Society, and then click "Enroll".
7. When you return to the "Account Summary" screen, you can review your choice; and then Sign out (upper right corner).



That should do it!

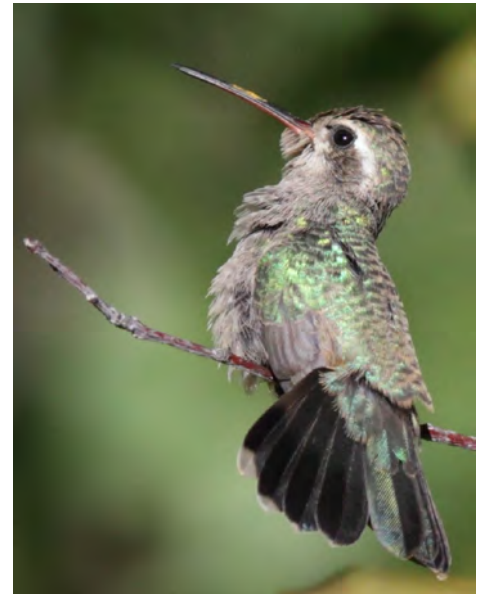
If you have any questions, or have difficulty setting up the link, please contact Laura Rhoden at treasurer@prescottaudubon.org or (928) 776-4514.



Golden-winged Warbler, 2015-09-23, Hassayampa River, Bradshaw Mountains, Prescott National Forest, Yavapai County. Observed foraging in Arizona Alder canopy. Photograph by David Moll.



The second documented occurrence of Prothonotary Warbler in the Prescott area, 2015-10-05, Watson Woods. Photograph by David Moll.



Broad-billed Hummingbird, 2015-10-15, Moore residence, Prescott. Photograph by David Moll.



Northern Saw-whet Owl, 2015-11-17, off Indian Creek Road. Photograph by Micah Riegner.



Prescott Audubon Society President Sue Drown presents Chapter meeting guest speaker Troy Corman, AGFD Non-Game Biologist and co-author of the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas, with a certificate of appreciation and PAS lens cleaning cloth. Photograph by Pamela Hanover.