

Wild Wednesday, 28 January 2021. Snow Birds by Walt Anderson

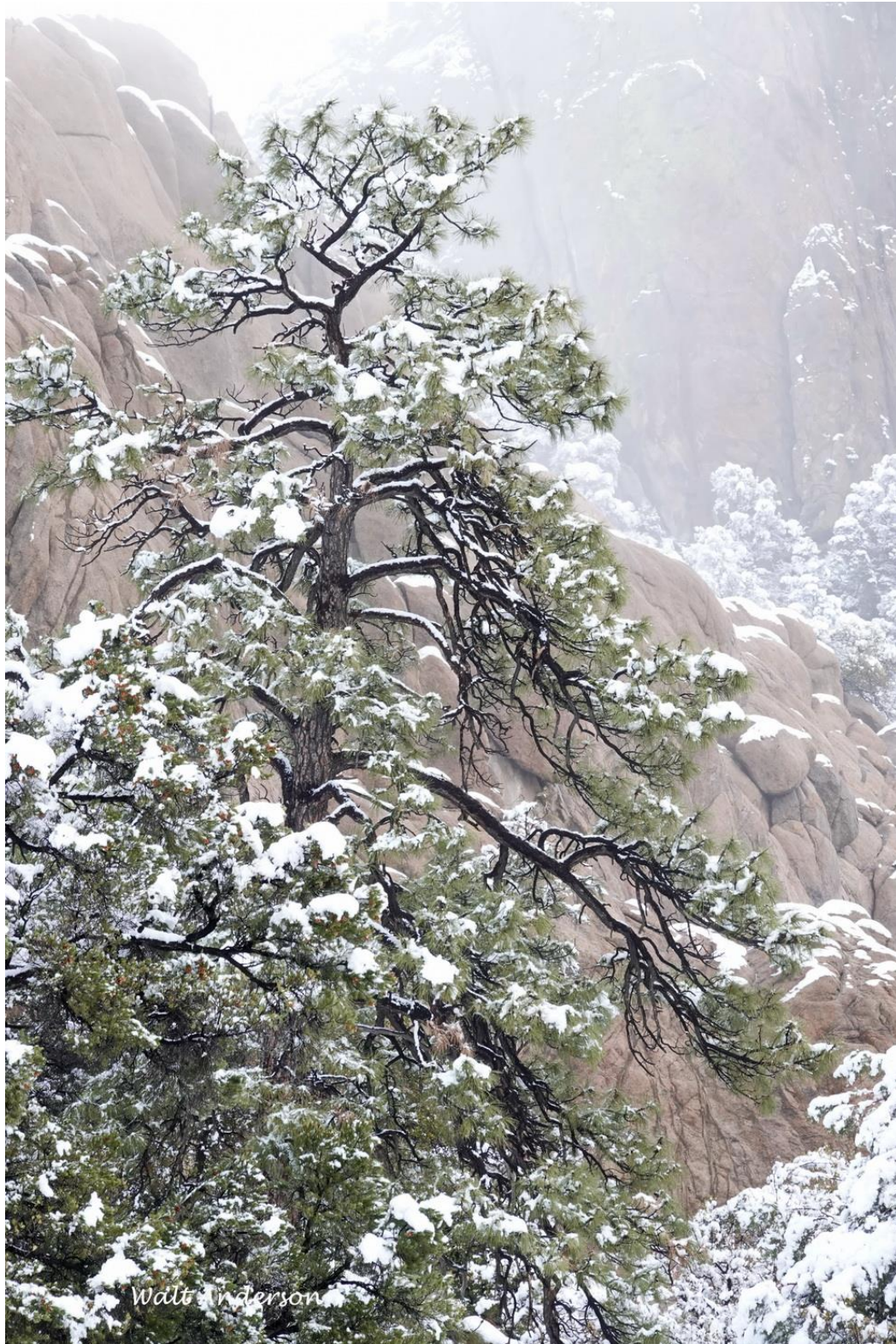
A powerful snowstorm in Prescott, Arizona this week created enormous drifts and endless awestruck Facebook posts. The Granite Dells, beautiful on any given day, took on special winter character in the storm. I want to share just a few of my images during the past couple days; more will surely come later.

In my last post, I described the challenges that birds face in these unusual, stressful conditions. Getting enough to eat and keeping from freezing during the long nights are serious tasks for the birds, so they tend to become fearless at these times. I was able to take hundreds of photos of birds that paid me no mind, so I would like to present a few of them as a tribute to their beauty and resilience.

Above all, I want to emphasize just how important the natural world is to our health and peace of mind. We cannot improve upon nature, so the best we can do is preserve significant landscapes, like the Granite Dells, so that the future of people and wildlife is much brighter than it would be otherwise. It's up to us.



Snow falling near Point of Rocks along the Peavine Trail. Such a special landscape!



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Ponderosa Pine in falling snow near Point of Rocks.



The beautiful valley and the Constellation Trail peaks from the Peavine Trail. Save the Dells' long negotiations with the City and Arizona Eco Development resulted in this area being protected under the Letter of Intent, so now it's up to the Council to finish the job with the win-win-win we have always wanted.



Hard not to chuckle at this defiant pose of a Spotted Towhee!



Fox Sparrow is rare in the Dells, as they usually winter in dense chaparral at a bit lower elevation. An even rarer Sagebrush Sparrow showed up too.



Dark-eyed Juncos in different flavors are typical “snow birds” in the winter here.



This Oregon-type junco was extracting seeds from a wild sunflower.



Mourning Doves waiting for a break in the storm to go foraging.



Bewick's Wrens are fidgety little birds very hard to catch in a photo, so this was a pleasing success.



Crissal Thrashers are typically shy compared to Curve-bills, but they have been bold during the storm and its aftermath. "Crissal" refers to its rusty undertail feathers, the crissum. I loved how the oak branches framed the bird.



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An Anna's Hummingbird weathering the storm.



High Rappel Dells with fresh snow. It reminds me of the famous "Pintos" painting of Bev Doolittle.