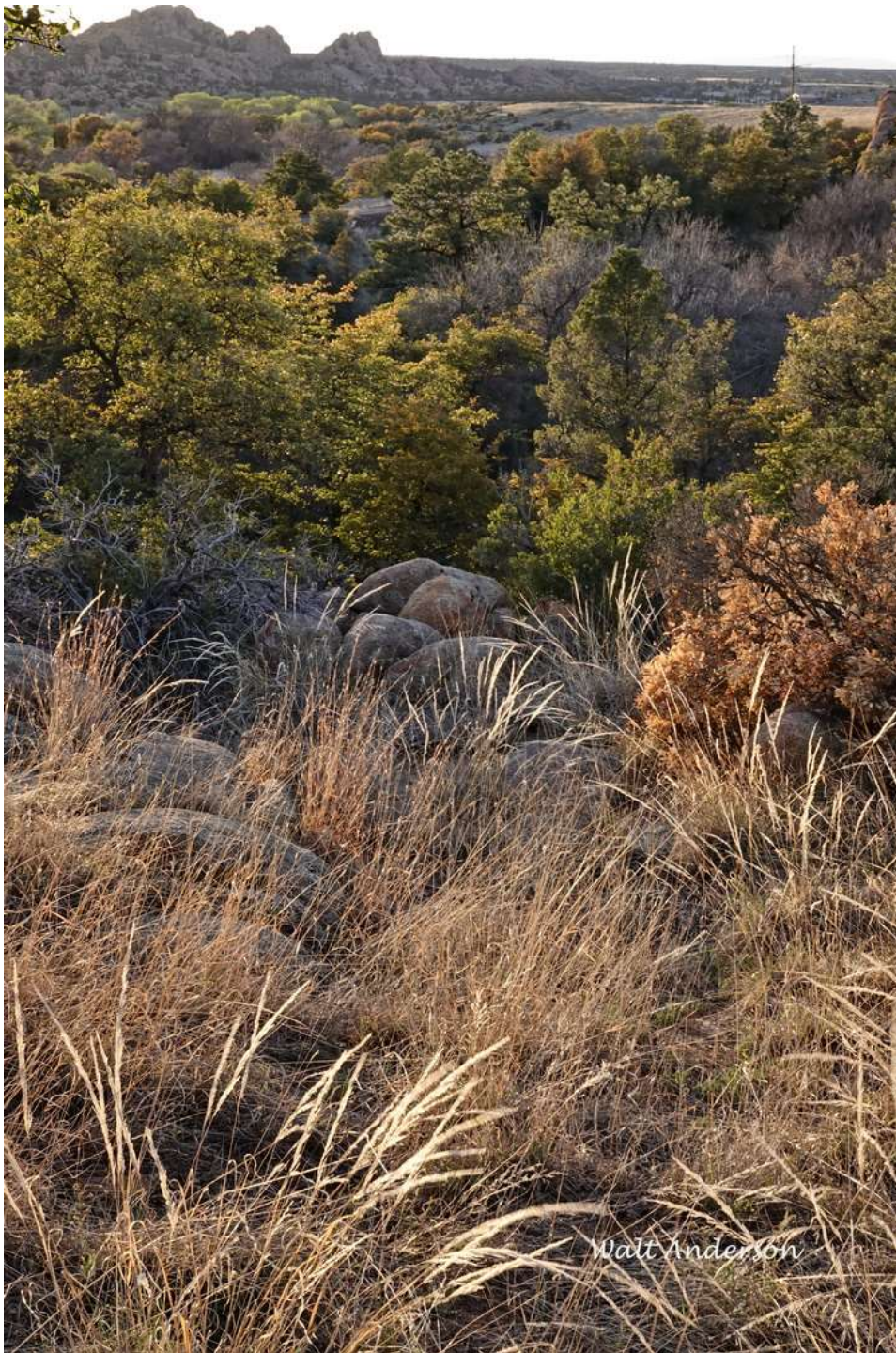


Wild Wednesday. 24 November 2021. Thankful Thursday, by Walt Anderson

The last couple years have been hard on everyone, and there is no need to revisit those hardships now. Instead, there is so much to be thankful for. This Wild Wednesday is a celebration of the blessings we can count and an invitation to get out there and seek inspiration and renewal in the outdoors.



While many turkeys find Thanksgiving a holiday to avoid, the good news is that Wild Turkey populations in Arizona and elsewhere in North America have rebounded dramatically thanks to sensible protection, repatriation efforts, and some habitat improvements. I am deeply grateful to all the people who have helped recover wildlife populations that were in peril. There is much left to do, but there is much to appreciate too.



After five years of challenging negotiations, the City of Prescott reached an annexation agreement with Arizona Eco Development that protects almost 475 acres of gorgeous land in the Granite Dells from being gobbled up by development. I am grateful to all who worked to achieve this success, and I am proud to have been on the front lines of support for this outcome through my efforts with Save the Dells and the Granite Dells Preservation Foundation. My hat is off to members of the public and city officials who helped to make this possible!



Three of the key people who worked on the deal that is now protecting the Peavine and Iron King Trails around iconic Point of Rocks: Joe Baynes, Recreation Services Director; Chris Hosking, Trails/Natural Parklands Coordinator; and Joe Trudeau of Save the Dells.

Some of the major issues in the last city elections were support for open space (particularly in the Dells), control of the speed of development, and better stewardship of our limited water supplies. Yesterday (11/23/21) saw the swearing in of new council members and mayor, and we are optimistic that the new leadership will support our efforts to expand city open space holdings to accomplish the greater Granite Dells Regional Park & Preserve that is still possible.



Prescott recently signed a Letter of Intent for the purchase of 300 acres of crucial Dells landscape of the North Storm Ranch, another prolonged and patient negotiation that will pay huge dividends for people and wildlife. It will connect the previously acquired parcel where many of our most popular trails are now located and the newly protected. Wow, even more reason to celebrate this year!



Panorama from the heart of the Dells. A grand visual symphony!



I am grateful for the city's decision some years back to buy the water rights to Watson and Willow reservoirs. In an arid landscape, having open water for recreation is another amenity for citizens' quality of life, as well as a financial asset for the community.



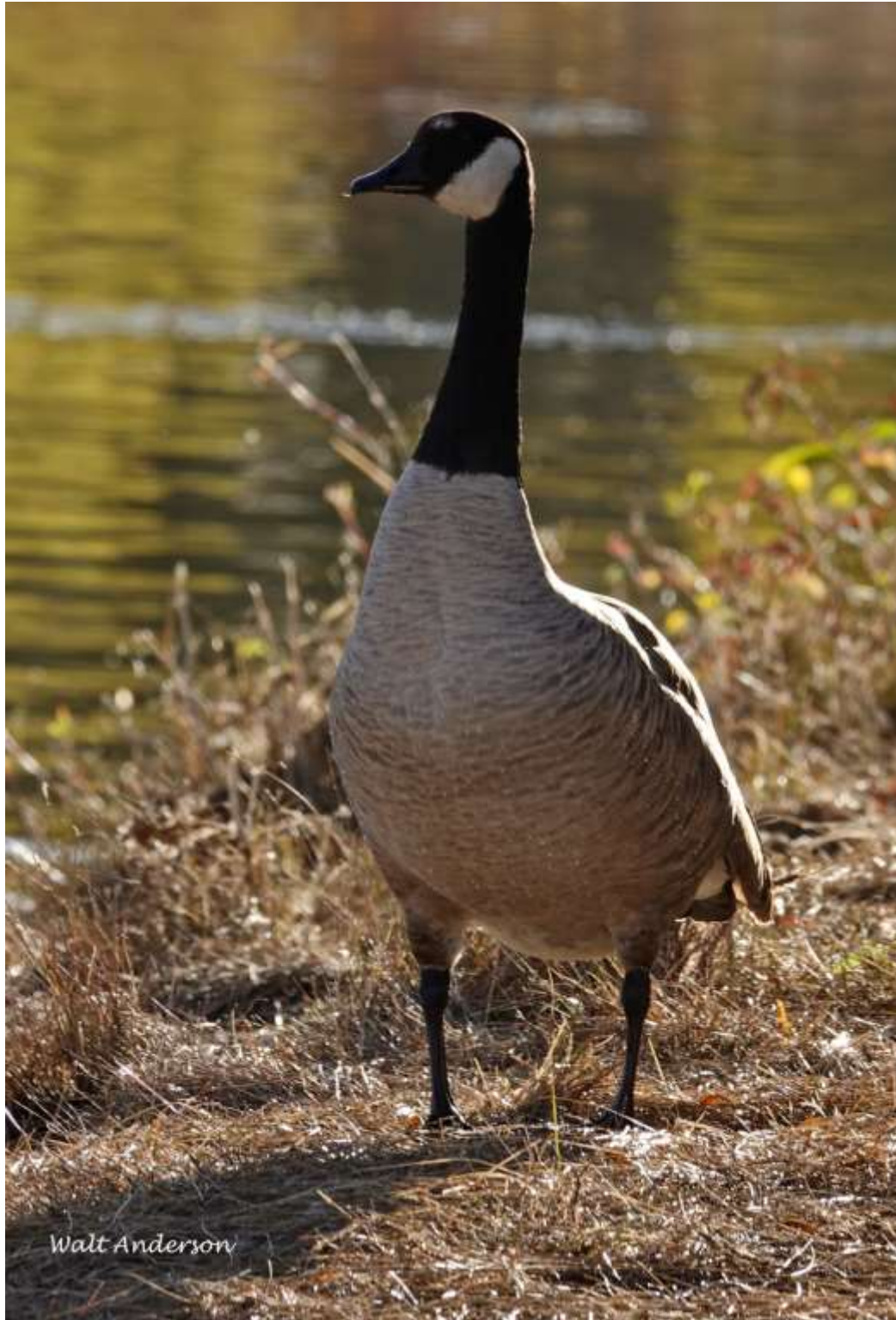
Watson Woods is a vibrant part of the Watson & Willow Lakes Ecosystem Important Bird Area. Prescott Audubon Society is the steward for this IBA within the City of Prescott. https://aziba.org/?page_id=674



American White Pelicans and other waterbirds coexist with humans recreating on these reservoirs. The Important Bird Area is a recognition of the wildlife values of these wetland habitats, and it is another economic engine for the city as it draws in birding enthusiasts from around the country. Wildlife-based tourism is a complement to the values that natural open spaces provide Prescott residents.



So unless you are the Thanksgiving turkey . . .



or soon to be the Christmas goose, you have much to be thankful for this holiday season. Enjoy the moment, but remember that many of our greatest blessings have come through the efforts of people like us who invested time, effort, and money to secure the amenities we now enjoy. I hope you will be among those who care enough to leave lasting positive legacies for those who follow. Thank you.