

# Blackhawk Watch

Newsletter of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society

TM Volume XLVII • Number 3 • JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2018



## January Programs

### Come See Members' Photos

You still have time to submit photos for our Members' Night Programs. The deadline is Jan. 10. You will get five minutes to speak about your five photos. Photos can be anything nature related and you are not required to say much. And you don't have to be a professional photographer either. Photos should be submitted to Nanette Armstrong, nancearmstrong@gmail.com. Even if you don't submit photos you will enjoy what others have been up to. Join us **Wednesday, January 17** in Sedona and **Thursday, January 18** in Flagstaff.

### Hot Cocoa, Cookies and Raptors in Sedona: Doesn't get any better than that!

Michele Losee

Saturday, December 9th was a beautiful day in Sedona, and drinking homemade hot cocoa and eating yummy cookies all while hanging out with some pretty cool raptors made it even better. The International Raptor & Falconry Center's Youth Ambassador, eight-year old Danae Dearden, hosted a fundraising event for a couple of hours on top of Airport Mesa. Those attending could choose from a variety of hot cocoa flavors with toppings and homemade cookies, and spend time with the raptors, Finley, Coral and Kieran. Danae, who is also a NAAS scholarship recipient, organized a fantastic coloring contest that created three winners. Her mother, Rena, hand drew our very own Finley! He is a handsome American Kestrel and all the artists did him great justice. By the way, Finley did quality check the sugar cookies before the event. (Photo at left).



*Hot Cocoa, continued on page 2*

**JANUARY-FEBRUARY PROGRAMS**

**Members' Photo Night**

**Sedona - January 17 (Wed)** - Sedona Public Library • 3250 White Bear Road

**Flagstaff - January 18 (Thurs)** - Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church • Benson Hall • 1601 N. San Francisco St.

#### **Guest Speaker - Brent Bitz**

*"Deserts and Rivers: Birding Namibia and Botswana"*

**Flagstaff - February 15 (Thurs)** - Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church • Benson Hall • 1601 N. San Francisco St.

**Sedona - February 21 (Wed)** - Sedona Public Library • 3250 White Bear Road

*Meetings start at 6:45 pm with social time. Formal meeting begins at 7:00 pm.*

## February Programs

### Deserts and Rivers: Birding Namibia and Botswana



Lilac-breasted Roller

Arid and riparian areas located in southern Africa, Namibia and Botswana contain some of the most exciting birding in Africa. Travelling there in August 2017, our February speaker, **Brent Bitz**, birded the diverse habitats in each of these countries.

Located on the west coast of southern Africa, Namibia is almost twice the size of California but has only 2,100,000 people, giving it one of lowest population densities in the world. Bordered by a chilly

Atlantic Ocean on the west, the Namib Desert at approximately 55 million years old, is the oldest desert in the world. However seasonal rivers flowing out of the adjacent highlands provide birders with an abundance of local, migratory and endemic species. Swallow-tailed Bee Eaters foraging in acacia trees, Pale Chanting Goshawks trying to catch Namaqua Sand Grouse at waterholes and thousands of Greater and Lesser Flamingos provided lots of excitement.

The highlands of Namibia are home to Etosha National Park. Centered around a vast seasonally flooded saltpan, Etosha provides habitat for Lilac-breasted Rollers, Martial Eagles, four species of hornbill as well as large herds of elephant, zebra and excellent opportunities to see Black Rhinos, cheetah and leopard.

Moving inland, Botswana is home to the Okavango River and its famous delta. The Okavango Delta is the world's largest inland river delta and is home to hundreds of bird species. Brent spent some days on an island in the river, which gave him an opportunity to cruise it in a skiff. While the bird of the trip was the Pell's Fishing Owl, also known as the Flying Pumpkin, he also saw four species of stork, fifteen species of heron, including the Goliath Heron, largest in the world, together with hippos, crocodiles and Malachite Kingfishers.

Brent is a Board Member of NAAS and Friends of the Verde River and has had a life long interest in the outdoors and habitat preservation. A retired businessman, he and his wife, Dion, now live in Sedona and enjoy the wonderful diversity of northern Arizona.

Please join Brent on **Thursday, February 15** at our monthly program in Flagstaff and on **Wednesday, February 21** in Sedona.



## Thoughts from the Board

### Bird Sanctuaries: Our Crown Jewels

First created some five years ago, Northern Arizona Audubon's Bird Sanctuaries have quickly become a crown jewel of our Chapter. Some past and present members had realized that wonderful local bird habitat was being neglected and they resolved to do something about it.

While Northern Arizona is blessed with a bounty of IBA's (Anderson Lake, Tuzigoot and Lower Oak Creek), these forward thinking members realized that some smaller scale opportunities existed to promote our mission of habitat conservation and restoration. They also realized that, with some NAAS support, we could reenergize some great birding hot spots.

Out of this simple but powerful idea came the creation of our Northern Arizona Audubon Bird Sanctuary Program. This is centered around the idea that your Chapter could identify a few excellent locations, prepare a strategic plan of engagement with the landowners (state or local governments) and commit time and resources to help make them both birding hot spots and educational resources for the community.

Since 2014, through the hard work of the Sanctuary Stewards (a round of thanks to Matthew Crozier, Lisa Grubbs, Rich Armstrong, Trevor Hinkley and Cristina Vojta), we now have four thriving sanctuaries.



### Meet Board Member Nanette Armstrong

About four years ago Nanette became the NAAS Hospitality Chair and the board slyly made her a board member. She serves as the NAAS liaison for the Verde Valley Birding & Nature Festival, is still the Hospitality Chair Below-the-Rim (BTR), and just this year became the Program Chair. She is also the chapter's Facebook moderator. Nanette occasionally leads a field trip and helps man a booth at festivals.

She graduated from West Virginia University with a degree in Biology, then completed Nuclear Medicine School and worked in the field for 10 years. She and husband Rich have been married 31 years and have been birding about 30. They birded all over Texas, Oregon, and traveled to many other states. Her favorite job is being a mom to son, Clint. She has been involved in the local Audubon chapters everywhere that they lived and has done over 50 Christmas Bird Counts. They moved to Sedona six and a half years ago. She has lots of favorite birds especially the Western Kingbird and Common Nighthawk and loves feeding the assortment of birds that live in or visit her backyard. That list stands at 154 birds!

**Bubbling Ponds Preserve** – Has the largest eBird list of any site in Yavapai County.

**Sedona Wetland Preserve** – Site of some superb waterfowl and shorebird viewing, including a recently seen American Bittern, a local first.

**Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve** – Our Chapter has provided many field trips there and introduced the wonder of birds to Flagstaff residents.

**Kachina Wetlands** – We recently helped lead the award of a Heritage Grant to remove invasive plants and install a floating viewing deck.

Our program is unique in Arizona and no other Chapter has anything even remotely like our sanctuaries. Given our small size, everyone should feel proud of our program and its accomplishments.

Of course, none of this would happen without volunteer help. Whether it is removing weeds on a sanctuary workday, leading a field trip or just taking some friends out to see birds, you can help. Please remember that without the active participation of our members none of this would have happened.

Submitted by,  
Brent Bitz  
Director-At-Large

### *Hot Cocoa, continued on from page 1*

older boys and girls that enjoyed spending time with Finley and Kieran, a Harris's Hawk. A few NAAS board members attended as well. Brent Bitz and Julie Wills got some one-on-one time with Finley and Brent spent some time with Kieran (photo at right). President Dennis Tomko and Nanette were there to give support as well.



Kieran had been very sick with a respiratory infection, so, his appearance was quite a miracle. It was this life-threatening illness that prompted an incredible young lady, Danae, to host a fundraiser to offset the very expensive medical costs. IRFC is very fortunate to have such a sweet and aware soul as our Youth Ambassador. She even was recognized in Safeway while shopping for the event. This was the most successful fundraiser to date! And was a huge success because of two awesome ladies in particular, Rena and Danae Dearden.



Youth Ambassador Danae (left, in photo with Finley): IRFC cannot think of a better young person to champion our mission and inspire young people to care about raptors as well as lead the future generation of raptor conservationists. She is a leader beyond her years and we have no doubt she will carry out the mission of making the world a better place for raptors with conviction.

Danae has shown a passion for raptors and strong interest in caring for them that can't seem to be squashed. Her maturity and desire to learn is quite impressive. When she is old enough to start her falconry apprenticeship, which I'm sure will come no later than exactly ON her 12th birthday, it will be an honor for me (Michele) to sponsor her and watch her join the ranks of the very few female falconers.

## Northern Arizona Audubon Society Mission Statement

To promote the understanding and appreciation of birds and other wildlife  
and the conservation and restoration of their natural habitats.



## Northern Arizona Audubon Field Trips

### Sedona Wetlands

*Every Sunday starting January 7*

*8:30 am - 11:00 am*

*Sedona Wetlands Steward: Rich Armstrong*

*richarmstrong@q.com, 928-282-3675*

Meet at the Sedona Wetlands parking lot at 8:30 am. These wetlands at the Sedona Wastewater Treatment Plant provide habitat for wintering waterfowl. Ducks are abundant at this time of year. A variety of sparrows winter around the lagoons. Raptors, including Northern Harriers, often make appearances. We will have access to ponds that are typically inaccessible to the public. Dress warmly in layers. A pit toilet is available. Various leaders. Contact Rich with questions.

### Clear Creek Campground

*Saturday, January 27*

*Leader: Holly Kleindienst, 928-853-6887*

*hollykleindienst@gmail.com*

Meet at 8:30 am at the end of FSR 626 in the Day Use Parking Lot past the campground. This area on the Coconino National Forest has a mix of mesquite bosque and riparian habitat along the banks of Clear Creek. Likely birds are wintering warblers, four species of woodpecker, a variety of sparrows, and wrens. Wintering Bald Eagles are possible, as well as Cedar Waxwings and Hermit Thrushes. We will hike two miles over level but sometimes uneven terrain. Dress warmly in layers. Pit toilets are available.

### Bubbling Ponds

*Saturday, February 10*

*Leader: Kay Hawkee, khawkee@gmail.com*

Meet at the parking lot at 9 am. No restrooms. We will walk the Black Hawk Trail through mesquite bosque, the riparian corridor along Oak Creek and finish up at the ponds - approximately 1.8 mi. Bring water, snacks and scope if you want. We will be looking for residents and winter birds.

**NEED DIRECTIONS** to a field trip meeting place?  
Specific directions are on the NAAS website for most field trip sites, [www.northernarizonaaudubon.org](http://www.northernarizonaaudubon.org) or call the field trip leader.

Watch for new trips in your monthly email updates. Read trip details and past trip reports in our website calendar, [northernarizonaaudubon.org](http://northernarizonaaudubon.org).

## Field Trips Reports

### Sedona Wetlands - November 19

**Leader: Vic Nelson**

Ten folks joined the leader for the first Sedona Wetlands field trip of the season. Highlights were a perched Great Horned Owl, Common Goldeneye, two Western Grebes, two Eared Grebes, an immature Snow Goose, Cassin's Finches and in pond 1 close viewing of Coots, Gadwalls, Wigeons, and Ring-necked Ducks.

### Clear Creek Campground - November 26, 2017 8-11 am

**Leader: Holly Kleindienst**

Eight birders enjoyed a glorious fall morning and 32 species of birds. The place was packed with American Robins, Western Bluebirds, and Hermit Thrushes. Several Sage Thrashers and a Loggerhead Shrike posed nicely for great scope views. A Bewick's Wren gave the group an up close scolding, which attracted a Hutton's Vireo AND a Ruby-Crowned Kinglet, allowing us to compare the two birds side by side. But the highlight of the day was a Bridled Titmouse that also joined the party, and foraged boldly just feet from our feet for nearly 5 minutes; it was so close our binoculars wouldn't even focus on it, and we all just stood there enjoying its high cuteness factor!

### Bubbling Ponds-Page Springs Fish Hatchery - December 2, 2017 8-11 am

**Leader: Holly Kleindienst**

We had an amazing turnout for the Bubbling Ponds field trip with 16 birders, with all levels of experience, from professional bird surveyors to new birders. It could have been utter chaos, but the new birders grouped up front, and the more experienced trailed behind, and everyone assisted in spotting 43 species of birds. Birds that cooperated for the best views were Say's and Black Phoebe, a Spotted Towhee eating berries, Vermilion Flycatcher in a variety of odd plumage, and wintering ducks including American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, and Mallards. At the far end of the Willow Point Trail, numerous American Goldfinches put on quite a show in their tawny winter coats, allowing endless great scope views for everyone. A few Belted Kingfishers were also very cooperative. Sparrows were surprisingly few, but we all saw 1st winter White-crowned Sparrows as well as full plumage adults. About half of the group got to see an expected Brown Creeper in the large Cottonwood trees near the Amphitheater off the Black Hawk Trail. We ALL saw one tiny unidentified TINY "owl" perched on the banks of Oak Creek. OWL! Everyone got to see it through the scope, with its lovely eye rings, and all its ceramic beauty! Such fun that everyone played the game to see this non-bird that some goofball planted on a root ball with mud along the creek. What a HOOT!

## Yardie Award

Northern Arizona Audubon began the "Yardie Award" last fall. Any NAAS member that has identified 25 or more birds from their yard can get a yardie award. Congratulations to the following who have gotten a yardie award!

*Dena Greenwood & Randy Miller - 100 & 125 Yardie Award  
Chip Engemann 50 & 75 Yardie Award, then 100 Yardie Award*

*Brent Bitz 50 Yardie Award*

*Janet Brown & Andrew J. Field 25 Yardie Award*

*Kathy Fraser & Emmory Hoefle 25 Yardie Award*

*Denae Dearden 25 Yardie Award*

*Karen Lyons 25 Yardie Award, then 50 & 75 Yaride Award*

*Janet Quinn 25 Yardie Award*

*Rich & Nanette Armstrong 150 Yardie Award*

*John Hildebrand 100 & 125 Yardie Award*

*Claire Wright 50 & 75 Yardie Award*

*Kathryn Hart & Jeff Pickens 25 Yardie Award*

*Bob & Kristin Rothrock 50 Yardie Award*

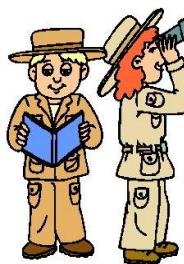
*Beth & Ross Hawkins 50 & 75 Yardie Award*

*Tina Whitley & Peter Angerbauer 50 Yardie Award*

*Bev Hagerman 25 Yardie Award*

*Phyllis Kegley 75 Yardie Award*

*Celia Holm - 100 & 125 Yardie Award*





## Kachina Wetlands through the Lens of eBIRD

Christina Vojta

The international database “eBIRD” was established in 2002 by Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society as a way for professional and recreational birdwatchers to record their bird observations and explore data. Today eBIRD is the largest and fastest growing biodiversity database in existence, with millions of observations entered every month. Although not everyone enters their data in eBIRD, enough data has been entered to provide meaningful information on the diversity and abundance of birds at specific locations, as well as provide rough changes in abundance and distribution across large landscapes.

In December, I decided to use eBIRD to explore Kachina Wetlands, one of Northern Arizona Audubon’s four bird sanctuaries. Data exploration was easy to do because Kachina Wetlands is an eBIRD hotspot with all checklists available through one simple search. This article highlights some of the things I learned through this exploration.

To date (December 17), 1,383 checklists have been submitted for Kachina Wetlands, including historical records from as far back as 1992. A total of 223 species have been recorded, which makes it the second most diverse hotspot in Coconino County, behind Mormon Lake (225 species) and ahead of Ashurst Lake (216 species). These rankings shift around from time to time depending on which sites have had recent new sightings. Last year, Kachina Wetlands led the pack.

When I explored the last ten years, I found that 208 species had been reported for Kachina Wetlands, which is 15 species fewer than the grand total of 223. This made me curious. Which 15 species have we not seen at Kachina Wetlands in the last ten years? This took extra digging, but most were rare species completely out of their range, like Chukar and Lapland Longspur. Only three of these rare species had been seen more than once: Bobolink (seen in October 1992 and May 2006), Baird’s Sandpiper (seen in September 2001 and October 2003), and Semipalmated Plover (seen in August 1998 and August 2003).

Despite not seeing fifteen species that were recorded in past decades, we continue to add new species to Kachina Wetlands, due to the sharp eyes and diligent checklists of our fellow birders. In 2017, four new species were recorded for the first time: Inca Dove (October, Roger Sleeper), Fox Sparrow (October, Parker Davis), Swamp Sparrow (October, Brian Healy), and Rusty Blackbird (November, Tom Hedwall). In all, 166 species were recorded in 2017 through the date of this writing, December 17th.

Water distribution among the ponds began to change in July of this year, with Pond 2 (the marshy pond) now standing empty and replaced with two new ponds to the west. Because of this, we are likely to see changes in species composition and abundance. For example, I’ve noticed an increase in American Pipits, Brewer’s Blackbirds, and Brown-headed Cowbirds due to the bare shorelines along the two new ponds.

November and December had milder weather than in years past, so most of the pond surfaces are still ice-free and are being used by Canada Geese, Northern Pintails, Mallards, Green-winged Teals, Ring-necked Ducks, Pied-billed Grebes, and other waterbirds. If you get out there, be sure to look for the Greater White-fronted Goose (Brooks Hart, December 16).

If you haven’t started entering your checklists into eBIRD, consider making this your New Year’s Resolution for 2018. Through your contribution, we will continue to learn more about Kachina Wetlands and the diversity of birds that use it.



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NAAS is now on Facebook. Check out our page frequently because there is always new information on it.



# New & Renewing Members

**Individual**  
**(Northern Flicker)**  
 Melinda Bell  
 Sara Cecil  
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 Jack Evans  
 Charlotte Gourley  
 Patti Greenelch  
 Ruby Hammond  
 Kevin Harding  
 Trevor Hinckley  
 Alison Jones  
 Marilaine Jones  
 Gisela Kluwin  
 Karen Lyons

Judy Mabry  
 Marlene Macek  
 Laura J. McVay  
 Jean Palumbo  
 Jan Parrott  
 Maureen Price  
 Linda Rahn  
 Martha Somers  
 Ruth Wiedeman  
 Julie Wills  
 Tracy Zubrod  
**Family (Gambel's Quail)**  
 Sam & Sarah Braun  
 Jody Gebhardt

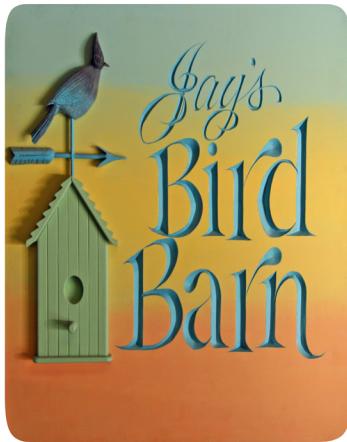
Denise & Rob Gibbs  
 Dean & Kate Johnson  
 June & Bruce Johnson  
 Steve & Betsy McKellar  
 Bob & Diane Mutchie  
 Mark Philippart  
 James & Gloria Wiener  
**Enhanced (Blackhawk)**  
 Stewart Boots  
 Jeri Higgins  
 Clifford Holtz  
 Vic Nelson

**To see when your membership expires, look at the date next to your address on your newsletter.**

## Have a story you would like to share?



The BlackHawk Watch is published bi-monthly September through May.  
 Articles are welcome from members and non-members. Send proposed articles by email to Debbie at weehawks@hotmail.com Deadline for copy is the 15th of the month.



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## NAAS Directory

### Officers

- President - Dennis Tomko
- Vice President - Open
- Secretary - Michele Losee
- Treasurer - Julie Wills

### Directors

- Nanette Armstrong
- Brent Blitz
- Kristine Follett
- Ruby Hammond
- Kay Hawkle
- Trevor Hinckley
- Michele Losee
- Barbara Hirt
- Dennis Tomko
- Tina Whitley
- Julie Wills

### Committee Chairs

- Conservation: Amy Zimmermann
- Education: Tina Whitley
- Field Trips: ATR - Sue Ordway BTR - Rich Armstrong
- Hospitality: ATR - Janet May BTR - Nanette Armstrong
- Membership: Barbara Hirt and Kristine Follett
- Programs: Nanette Armstrong
- Publicity: ATR - Phyllis Kegley BTR - Kristine Follett

### Sanctuary Stewards

- Bubbling Ponds Steward: Lisa Grubbs
- Kachina Wetlands Steward: Cristina Vojta
- Picture Canyon Steward: Trevor Hinckley
- Sedona Wetlands Steward: Rich Armstrong

### General

- Books: Brent Blitz
- Facebook: Nanette Armstrong
- NAAS Email: monitored by Dennis Tomko
- Newsletter Editor: Phyllis Kegley
- Newsletter Publisher: Debbie Compton
- VVBNF Representative: Nanette Armstrong
- Webmaster: Dennis Tomko

The Great Backyard  
Bird Count



Art by Charley Harper

**FEBRUARY 16-19, 2018**  
[www.BirdCount.org](http://www.BirdCount.org)

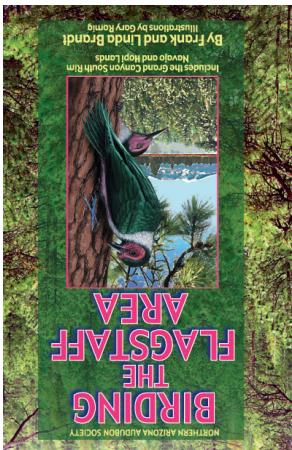
The Cornell Lab  
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 BIRD STUDIES CANADA



**Birders, Go to**  
[northernarizonaaudubon.org](http://northernarizonaaudubon.org)  
 and check for new  
 Field Trips on the calendar!



A website can be wonderful thing. But it is only a tool and it is not a silver bullet. Our website is a tool packed with information and more. The site user-friendly. This is why we have the menu on top and why there are so many submenus that you see as drop-downs when you mouse over a heading on the bar.

Here is an example – and also an announcement! Go to our website - <http://www.northernarizonaudubon.org/> - and mouse over "Checklists". You will see a drop-down entitled "Birding in the Flagstaff Area". If you click on that link, you will be taken to the entire "Birding in the Flagstaff Area" book. Try it; it's pretty nice.

Here is the announcement part: that book has been very successful to the point where it is sold out. There are no more hard copies to be purchased. Printing costs prohibit a reprinting, so it now exists in the digital form you see. You can't put it on your bookshelf, but it will always be readable on the website. Because each chapter is set as a separate document, you can even print it off if you wish to learn about or visit. Pretty cool, eh?

### From the Webmaster

**Have you visited our web site?**

I am interested in Volunteer opportunities

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Membership Chair, NAAS

Please make checks payable to **NAAS** and mail to:

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**BLACKHAWK WATCH**

