

BlackHawk Watch

Newsletter of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society

Volume XLVIII • Number 1 • September-October 2019

September Programs

Flagstaff Tuesday, September 24, 7:00 pm
Sedona Wednesday, September 25, 6:00 pm

Photogenic California Condors

Everyone probably has seen photos of California Condors but until you see **John “Verm” Sherman’s** photos you may wonder if you have. Verm’s photos are remarkable as is he.

In 2014, this Flagstaff wildlife photographer embarked on a quixotic but determined mission not just to photograph condors in the wild, but to photograph every individual condor in the Arizona/Utah population. Is Verm a delusional wingnut or an inspired sub-genius? Will he ever meet his White Whale, Condor #203? Join us and find out the answers to these questions plus a lot of cool facts about one of the rarest birds in the world.

You will not want to miss the story of his quest.

Photo by John
“Verm” Sherman



Want to view the condor release?

The California Condor release this year is September 28 at 11:00 am at the Vermilion Cliffs release viewing point. More information and a map to the site can be found on the Bureau of Land Management website.

ATTENTION SEDONA MEMBERS!!

**SEDONA MEETINGS ARE NOW ON THE 4TH
WEDNESDAY OF THE MONTH AT 6:00 PM**

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER PROGRAMS

Flagstaff Tuesday, September 24, 7:00 pm
Sedona Wednesday, September 25, 6:00 pm

Guest Speaker - John “Verm” Sherman - “Photogenic California Condors”

Flagstaff Tuesday, October 22, 7:00 pm
Sedona Wednesday, October 23 6:00 pm

Guest Speaker - Janie Agyagos - “Bats of Northern Arizona”

Flagstaff meetings are on the fourth Tuesday at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church/Benson Hall

Sedona meetings are on the fourth Wednesday at the Sedona Public Library

Come 15 minutes early to socialize and enjoy some refreshments.

October Programs

Flagstaff Tuesday, October 22, 7:00 pm
Sedona Wednesday, October 23, 6:00 pm

Bats of Northern Arizona



Bats often are misunderstood and understudied. At the October meeting, **Janie Agyagos**, wildlife biologist with the US Forest Service, will discuss their many benefits to our ecosystems as well as their survival requirements.

While she deals with all taxa groups, Janie has much experience inventorying and monitoring bats since 1993. She has excellent pictures of the diverse assemblage of bat species we have here in northern Arizona and can answer questions and bust myths. Theme snacks will be served for this appropriately Halloween topical talk.



Janie Agyagos will speak about Bats of Northern Arizona at the October meetings. She has been inventorying and monitoring bat species for 26 years.

Arizona Field Ornithologists Meeting in Flagstaff September 20-22

Ornithologists will be gathering in Flagstaff over the September 20-22 weekend at Northern Arizona University’s historical Ashurst Hall! The meeting will feature mini-expeditions to a handful of the under-birded locations and presentations about ongoing research on the status, behavior and distribution of Arizona birds.

Get information about the events, register and sign up early for the trips at www.azfo.org. Space for trips is limited so register early.





President's Message

Dennis Tomko

"Audubon is local everywhere." I was listening to the national convention keynote speech by David Yarnold, President and CEO of Audubon and that line just blew me away. Audubon is huge; it exists all over the world and it has become a major voice for conservation using birds as its banner. Yet, is Audubon here in Northern Arizona? Of course, it is. It is here but the voice and that character look just like Flagstaff or Sedona, or Cottonwood or Camp Verde. By way of example, Audubon has a very large and powerful voice in the protection of the Migratory Bird

Treaty Act but here we know when Yellow Warblers and Northern Rough-winged Swallows return in the Spring. We are not in the national political arena, but we know our neighbors here in Northern Arizona. We support Audubon's programs and political actions, but we know what to see and say right here. And the same can be said of the more than 450 local Audubon chapters. In that regard, "Audubon is local everywhere." We are not alone, but we are unique, and we are pertinent. On that note, I hope that many of you listen to Yarnold's talk. It can be found on You Tube with a search for "Audubon 2019 Yarnold". It's long because it summarizes everything that is happening in Audubon on many major conservation fronts. We are powerful.

Greenwood Fund Sponsors Course at Yavapai College

Upon the passing of Dena Greenwood in 2018, many NAAS members wished to memorialize Dena's substantial contributions to our community by making a donation in her name. In a relatively short period of time over \$7,000 was raised and her family decided that the most fitting tribute would be to use these funds for educational purposes. Dena had been very active in education over many years as she saw this as the key to sustaining a vibrant natural environment.

To that end, a team consisting of Randy Miller, Rob Gibbs, Rita Faruki and Brent Bitz has been busy developing a course called An Introduction to Natural History Field Studies. However, the really exciting news is that Yavapai College has become our partner in this endeavor and the course is now part of their non-credit curriculum.

This four-session course will introduce students to the diverse habitats of the Greater Verde Valley region with special emphasis on understanding why these habitats exist where they do and the characteristic species found in each. Participants will visit our Bubbling Ponds and Sedona Wetlands sanctuaries and other natural areas, learn about the region's plants and animals, and get a hands-on introduction to the art of birding and other aspects of natural history field studies. The class will focus on identification of local species and stress the interdependence of the species discussed within each habitat. Opportunities to participate in natural history studies through a variety of citizen science projects will also be discussed.

Students will meet in the field the morning of each session to take advantage of wildlife activity and cooler temperatures, returning to the classroom mid-morning to expand on the day's lessons. NAAS recently purchased 20 binoculars specifically for educational purposes and these will be made available to the students. NAAS members Rita Faruki and Rob Gibbs will be the instructors for this course. The course registration may be found at the following link: <https://www.campusce.net/yc/course/course.aspx?C=9785&pc=40&mc=&sc=>

Yavapai College charges \$160 per student for this program and the Greenwood Fund will provide each student with a \$50 tuition reimbursement payment. With class size being limited to twelve students, this means that the fund will incur expenses of around \$600 per semester.

The Greenwood Fund intends to work with Yavapai College so that the program is offered twice per year, in Fall and Spring. Current funding will sustain the program for the next few years but it is hoped that the program will become permanent. Given this, the Fund is still seeking donations so that Dena's dream of encouraging the next generations to support healthy habitat through education can be realized. Donations may be made via the NAAS website through the following link: <https://nazaudubon.z2systems.com/np/clients/nazaudubon/donation.jsp?campaign=2&&test=true>



Audubon approves Camp Verde IBA

Audubon Arizona has approved the award of an Important Bird Area designation to a 17 mile stretch of the middle section of the Verde River. Starting from Parsons Park just west of I-17, the IBA follows the Verde River and includes the section of Wet Beaver Creek that extends up to Montezuma Castle National Monument and terminates at Rockin' River Ranch State Park.

The application was submitted by the Town of Camp Verde and was supported by funding provided by Friends of the Verde River and many volunteer hours by members of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society.

The Verde River is one of Arizona's last remaining perennially flowing river systems, with healthy riparian vegetation, including the extremely rare Fremont Cottonwood-Gooding Willow gallery forest type. It provides a unique habitat that is preferred by bird species of concern, such as Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher, Common Black-Hawk, Bell's Vireo, Yellow Warbler, and Lucy's Warbler.

The land ownership along the Verde River corridor through the Town of Camp Verde is a mix of private lands, public lands owned by Coconino National Forest and Arizona State Parks, tribal lands owned by the Yavapai Apache Nation, and public parks owned by the Town of Camp Verde.

Currently, the best access points to this IBA are Rezonico Park in Camp Verde and the Clear Creek campground area in Coconino National Forest. Future access points include Parsons Park in Camp Verde, Homestead Park in Prescott National Forest, and Rockin' River Ranch State Park which are all planned to be opened to the public after development is complete.

Our chapter is most fortunate in having four IBA's in our territory: Lower Oak Creek, Tuzigoot, Anderson Mesa and now Camp Verde. The richness of habitat in our area is something that we strive to protect through our various programs and volunteer efforts.

The following folks were instrumental in making the Camp Verde IBA happen: Dena Greenwood, Randy Miller, Chip Engelmann, Holly Kleindienst, Rich Armstrong, Chip Norton, Vic Nelson, Rob Bonner, George Kleindienst, Whit Manter, Kay Hawkelee, Lisa Grubbs, Julie Wills, Kristen Rotherock, Sam Hough, Pat Scott, Heather English, Joe Willy, Dana Epstein, Kathe Anderson, Rita Faruki, Dennis Tomko and Dana Epstein. Apologies if we have missed anyone.

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

PICTURE CANYON

September 8 (Sunday) 7:30 am - Noon

Meet at the Picture Canyon parking lot. Leader: Amy Zimmerman. Please RSVP amzimme@msn.com by September 6.

DEAD HORSE STATE PARK

September 14 (Saturday) 7:30 - 10:00 am

Meet at the farther parking lot where the playground equipment is located at Riverfront Park. Bring your state park passes or a few dollars (\$7 per car up to four persons) to cover the entrance fee to the park. We will carpool to the park. We will walk about 2 miles of riparian area along lagoons and the Verde River. Bring water, binoculars, a hat, and wear good hiking shoes. There is uneven terrain along the river trails. Restrooms are available. Call or text Kristen Rothrock at 928 634 3633 for more information.

LIZARDING AT TUZIGOOT

September 15 (Sunday) 7:30 - 9:30 am

Meet at the Tuzigoot River Access parking lot at 7:30 AM. We'll attempt to identify some of the Verde Valley's beautiful lizards. First, we'll look around the Verde River riparian habitat, and then head up the road to the Monument. Nine species are possible between the two locations. The walking distance will be short but expect it to get hot with little or no shade. Bring water, sun protection, and binoculars. Restrooms available at Tuzigoot National Monument. Jeff Tanner 602-677-4053.

LITTLE ELDEN SPRINGS

September 15 (Sunday) 7 am - 11 am

Meet at 7am at the McDonald's north of Flagstaff Mall. The walk will be about four hours, so bring binoculars, water, and snacks. Leader: Tom Linda. Please RSVP 928-864-9047 by September 13.

DEAD HORSE STATE PARK

September 28 (Saturday) 7:30 - 10:45 am

Meet at the Safeway parking lot in Cottonwood 7:30 am or in the park. We will be walking 3 miles of riparian, mesquite bosque and grassland habitat along the Verde River on the Greenway Trail, lagoons and armchair birding area. Bring water, binoculars, hat, and good hiking shoes. Trail will be flat, sandy and uneven in places. Restrooms available. Call or text Lisa Grubbs for more information. 928-592-3684

RED ROCK LOOP ROAD, SEDONA

October 4 (Friday) 4:30 pm - 6:30 pm

Join Nanette for an evening bird walk around her neighborhood. Meet at 215 Disney Ln, Sedona, AZ 86336. We'll walk about 3 miles round trip along a paved road looking for birds in this riparian area. Bring binoculars. Stay for supper. For more info: Nanette Armstrong 928-282-3675.

KACHINA WETLANDS

October 5 (Saturday) 8 am - 10 am

Meet at the entrance to Kachina Wetlands. For cell phone map directions, enter the address 2375 Utility Road, Flagstaff. This will be a 2-mile, 2-hour walk on flat terrain that is wheelchair accessible. Birding should be excellent because migrating waterfowl are passing through and wintering ducks will begin to show up. Enjoy new viewing opportunities from the floating observation deck that was installed through a grant from Arizona Game and Fish Heritage fund. Leader: Kathryn Hart, kathrynbirder@gmail.com

SEDONA WETLANDS 1 HOUR

October 6 (Sunday) 8:30 - 9:30 am

Meet at the Sedona Wetlands parking lot at 830 for a 1 hour quick check of pond 1 and the big pond for ducks and other winter arrivals. Rich Armstrong will lead. richarmstrong@q.com, 928-282-3675

BIRDS & POETRY BUBBLING PONDS

October 12 (Saturday) 12:00 noon - 2 pm

Meet at the parking lot at noon. Bring some poems you have written or some you'd like to share. Bring a lunch, binoculars, water, all optional. No restrooms. We'll walk to the Split Willow Amphitheater, birding along the way (about a mile round trip). An easy, flat trail. Leader: Rita Faruki 928-963-1146

BUBBLING PONDS PRESERVE

October 18 (Friday) 8 - 11 am

Meet at dirt parking lot at the ponds. No restrooms. We will walk 1.8 mi on flat, easy surface around the ponds, through Mesquite Bosque, grassland and riparian corridor along Oak Creek. Bring water, binoculars, hat, and good hiking shoes. Call or text Lisa Grubbs for more information. 928-592-3684.

PICTURE CANYON

October 19 (Saturday) 7:30 am - Noon

Meet at Picture Canyon parking lot. Leader: Debbie McMahon. Please RSVP: debbie_dsb@hotmail.com or text at 928-707-0610 by Oct. 17. Limit 10.

WINGFIELD MESA

October 20 (Sunday) 8 am - 11 am

We will walk 2 miles through grasslands on a mesa east of Camp Verde above the Verde River looking for wintering sparrows and other birds. Meet at White Bridge Picnic Area (34.549482, -111.850617) and we will carpool in. Bring water, binoculars, a hat, and good hiking shoes. A spotting scope may prove useful but not necessary. Trail will be flat. No restrooms available. Call or text Chip Engelmann at 724-599-7000 for more information.

ASHURST LAKE

October 27 (Sunday) 8 am - Noon

Meet at Mormon Lake Ranger Station on Lake Mary Road and carpool out to Ashurst Lake. We will study the waterfowl on the lake as well as migrating shorebird and land birds. This is prime-time for rare ducks (Surf, Black and White-winged Scoters). Birding will be for about four hours so bring lunch and especially warm clothing in case the weather is chilly. Also, and importantly, bring a scope if you have one; the leader will have one also, but the more scopes the better. Leader: Tom Linda. Please RSVP at 928-864-9047 by October 25.

SEDONA WETLANDS 1 HOUR

October 27 (Sunday) 8:30-9:30 am

Meet at the Sedona Wetlands parking lot at 830 for a 1 hour quick check of pond 1 and the big pond for ducks and other winter arrivals. Rich Armstrong will lead. richarmstrong@q.com, 928-282-3675

Highlights of Field Trips Below the Rim

Chip Engelmann had only one person at Clear Creek, but they got an Olive-sided Flycatcher. Rich Armstrong led two Mingus trips. The 1st was snowed out on May 7th, The 2nd had seven folks with great looks at Painted Redstart, Red-faced, Olive and Virginia's Warblers, Cordilleran Flycatchers, and all three Nuthatches. Nanette Armstrong had five for the photography workshop. Chip had 13 for Kachina. Highlights were an Osprey catching a fish and a tree swallow in a scope. Chip had seven for Mingus in August with seven species of warblers including Hermit and Townsend's as well as Band-tailed Pigeon.

Northern Arizona Audubon Society

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Tell your friends



Flight of the California Condors

by Rita Faruki

The Arizona Game & Fish had put out a public notice that they were going to do their annual release of endangered California Condors on September 22, 2018, the day of the Fall Equinox. The release site is in Northern Arizona on the Navajo Reservation at Vermillion Cliffs, a beautiful and remote site of reddish cliffs at the base of which are grasslands-perfect condor habitat.

I made the trip with a girlfriend. We spent the night amongst the cliffs along the Colorado River at Marble Canyon, with a nearly full moon. It is spectacular country and very familiar to my husband and me as part of our years on Navajo Land.

There were people from all over the world and it was very much like an eclipse party-people with all kinds of camera equipment and scopes were in attendance. The Game & Fish had a line of scopes and even a TV because they were recording the release. We were all scattered about the grasslands at the base of the cliffs. Up on top of the cliffs was the flight cage that housed four captive condors. You could see them bouncing around in the cage, big wings with white on them. The biologists had put some carrion up on the red rocks near the flight cage. A few wild condors were slowly circling the area, waiting for the release, just like us! They would slowly teeter over the area, waiting for their brethren to emerge and join up. The captive birds could see and hear their compadres milling about. Anticipation was high for humans and winged ones alike.

A Red-tailed Hawk has a 4 foot wingspan; a Golden Eagle has 7 feet of wings; a Condor's wings are 9.5 feet. Majestic they are.

When the biologist at the cage was ready to release them, he radioed down and we all counted from 10 to 1, like they do at the Kennedy Space Center!

10-9-8-7-.....We hit 1 and the gates flew open and three of the four condors blasted out while at the same time all these wild condors that had been hidden by the trees and rocks rose up to greet them and welcome them home. It made me weep it was so spectacular. Dozens of condors took to the air in a dance. Remember the captive condors have never flown like that, never known what it was like to land upon the earth. Sometimes they can be quite clumsy. but not so today. In synchrony the wild condors and the captive ones rose up all at once to dance in the sky. And once again the Earth welcomed these ancient birds to their rightful place in the sky. The Navajos that were there said harmony was restored.

A missing piece of the web of life was filled in that day. The Song of the Earth now has one of its missing notes being sung once again. That night the full tonal scale floated across the land. The Animal Kingdom felt in its cells the restoration and balance of the cycle of life.

At the moment of release, I didn't care that we as a society had spent millions of dollars to save one species. It mattered not. Only that they were returned to their ancestral homes and the niche was once again filled.

Upon returning home from the trip to that altered landscape, I had trouble sleeping. I had hoped that when I was able to go to bed I would dream of the magic and majesty of the great Condors. It was one of the most spectacular events I've witnessed in nature, and I am blessed to have seen more than most.

As a tribute to these magnificent birds, I quote here a piece from What Is Lightbody?

What Is Lightbody?

Invocation to Flight

I feel the tingling in my back.

I feel the weight in my shoulders.

I feel the spreading of my wings.

Preparing to fly,

I hear the call of the wind.

I smell the freedom of the skies.

I touch the edge of wonder,

As I begin to lift.

I love the feel of soaring.

I know the thrill of diving.

I light the sky with brilliance,

As I kiss the face of God.

Tashira Tachi-ren

4001 S. Woody Mountain Rd, Flagstaff AZ 86005



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New & Renewing Members

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

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- *Steward Kachina Wetlands:* Christina Vojta
- *Steward Picture Canyon:* Roy May



FINDING YOUR WAY

Directions to many of our field trip destinations can be found on the NAAS website under Conservation; checklists also are available. northernarizonaaudubon.org



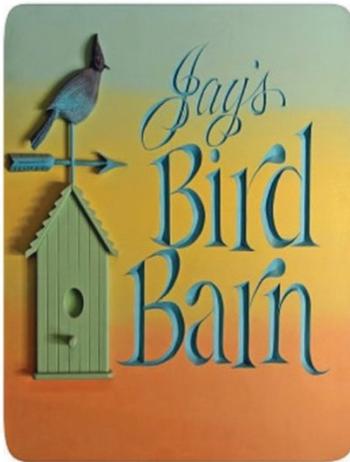
NAAS is now on Facebook. Check out our page frequently because there is always new information on it.

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 Phyllis at phylkeg4@gmail.com. Deadline for copy is the 15th of the month.



Birders, Go to northernarizonaaudubon.org and check for new Field Trips on the calendar!



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Membership Chair, NAAS

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

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Birds and Poetry

NAAS hosted a 'Birds & Poetry' evening at Bubbling Ponds preserve on July 17. The group assembled at the Split Willow Amphitheater and read poems they had written themselves or chose favorites to read. We wrote two group poems which was a blast! We tallied about 15 bird species as we walked. There is another poetry night planned for October. Please join in.

Our opus:

"The fiery moon rose over the dry Cornville grasslands. The sun had just turned down its thermostat an hour prior. Open your eye, be aware, the universe is watching. And we're all trying to figure out what it's thinking.

The doe, soft-eyed with her big ears swiveling leaped across the grassland. She knows.

She is in touch with this now moment.

Every moment provides opportunities to love the gifts we should not miss."