

# BlackHawk Watch

A stylized black hawk in flight, positioned between the words "BlackHawk" and "Watch". The hawk is black with white underparts and is shown in profile, flying towards the right. The background behind the hawk is a light blue silhouette of a mountain range.

Newsletter of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society

December, 2022

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**Northern Cardinal**  
**By Eric Gofreed**

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## In This Issue:

- Big Sit Reports
- President's Message
- Field Trip Reports
- New Book: The Adventures of an Arizona Birder
- eBird species trending map
- Bird Coloring Book
- Video of the Month
- What Bird is This?
- Membership in November

- **About our cover bird, Northern Cardinal**
- Cardinals don't migrate and they don't molt into a dull plumage
- Leave undergrowth in your backyard or around the edges, and you may have cardinals nesting on your property.
- Only a few female North American songbirds sing, but the female Northern Cardinal does.
- A perennial favorite among people, the Northern Cardinal is the state bird of seven states.
- The oldest recorded Northern Cardinal was a female, and was 15 years, 9 months old when she was found in Pennsylvania.



<https://www.northernarizonaaudubon.org/>

*Cardinalis cardinalis*

Conservation status: Low Concern



### Our Mission Statement:

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

*Most of the articles in this newsletter have been contributed by our NAAS members. You are invited to join us. Please submit articles or notes to: [nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org](mailto:nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org)*

[nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org](mailto:nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org)



I was joined by 8 birders at **Red Rock State Park on the Visitor Center roof** adjacent to the feeders on November 15th. It was a beautiful, sunny autumn day, which made the birds and their field marks easily visible. We identified 22 species during this Big Sit, in which we stood more than sat. We had great views of the feeder area and the skies while enjoying a panoramic view of the red rocks. Our favorite sighting was a White-throated Sparrow, an infrequent visitor to the park. It's bright white throat patch and white stripes/yellow lores stood out as it foraged for seeds on the ground. I was very happy about a perching female American Goldfinch, also an infrequent visitor, as it was the first time that I've seen this bird species in Arizona. Other highlights were a Mountain Chickadee, Bridled Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, and an Anna's Hummingbird with a brilliant red head and throat. Overhead, we had a male Red-winged Blackbird fly-by, who seemed to adjust it's flight to head to the Sedona Wetlands. Some Western Bluebirds flew over, distinguished by their calls to each other and flight patterns. A Verdin came into a feeder from the adjacent mesquite and acacia trees. To punctuate the end of the hour, a Northern Cardinal, Spotted Towhee, and American Robin made their appearance. Thanks to Red Rock State Park for accommodating us and also for filling the feeders before our arrival. We all had a fun and educational Big Sit time together!

*Jenny Barnes,*

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On November 22nd we were joined by 8 birders as we hosted our first one-hour **Stransky backyard Big Sit**. We spotted a total of 22 species, with a Mountain Chickadee being perhaps the most notable. Other species included Verdin, American Goldfinch, Lincoln's and Chipping Sparrows. People enjoyed seeing our creekside backyard, and sharing the bright sunny morning birding time together. Mark Phillipart even brought warm cranberry/walnut bread straight from the bakery to share! The coffee was on inside our house. Very enjoyable birding as well as visiting!

*Laura & Kip Stransky*



## President's Message

### Change is in the Air

The end of an era is complete with this issue of the BlackHawk Watch (BHW). Dennis Tomko graciously gave nine years of his life in dedicated management of the website and making sure the BHW was an innovative publication. The world is changing and we are working to keep up with those changes. A completely new website will launch around the first of the year. New volunteer, Cindy Correll, has stepped up as Webmaster and will resume publishing the BHW as her work schedule permits. Please bear with us as we make big changes.

We send out over 800 notifications to folks who have subscribed to the Black Hawk Watch. Of those, only 235 are members of our Chapter. We'd love for more readers to become members as we take on feeding more birds, reaching out to more students and leading more field trips.

Change is in the air and ours is not the only Audubon chapter in flux. I recently attended a Chapter Focus Group held by National Audubon to give input into a visioning process for its next strategic plan. Eight of us chapter leaders are seeing membership and volunteer numbers decline as folks age out. The consensus: A rejuvenation of membership is imperative.

So, to begin replacing those who are on their way beyond Audubon, we are reaching out to NAU students, Professors, and others to find out what's important to them? It's an exciting time when new volunteers are determining their vision and preparing to act on it!

My philosophy is that volunteers should "follow your heart." This way there's no "duty"; instead, a **cause** to be answered. Sad statistics from the 2022 State of the Birds report calls us to act on our mission: "To promote the understanding and appreciation of birds and other wildlife and the conservation and restoration of their natural habitats."

In order to let everyone know about the cause of saving birds, we'll be teaching more students and adults to appreciate birds, which can translate to helping their survival.



President's Message, continued

*"The 2022 U.S. State of the Birds report shows plummeting bird populations across almost all habitats while highlighting the need for further conservation efforts."*

[More Than Half of U.S. Birds Are in Decline, Warns New Report | Audubon](#)

In order to let everyone know about the cause of saving birds, we'll be teaching more students and adults to appreciate birds, which can translate to helping their survival. Looking to the future is a theme/vision that we are taking on. We welcome all your good intentions and support as we take flight toward a new future.

Kay Hawlee

President





Despite the cold cloudy morning of November 3rd, I was joined by 2 others on the **Jail Trail in Cottonwood**, hoping the rain clouds would go around us. We did manage to witness a scramble of birds come through. It was amazing to see so many Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Bridled Titmice together gleaning the bushes and trees all around us. Then White-breasted Nuthatches came all together. We had super good looks so close and they were all calling. The rain started to move in and we had to cut it short and ended up with only 10 species but we were all happy to be on the trail to share the experience.

*Trip Leader: Janie Stewart*



Ruby-crowned Kinglet by Dennis Tomko

5 birders joined me on November 5th for a nearly 2-mile walk along **Woods Canyon Trail**. Despite the early morning chill, it turned out to be an exceptional day for birding. We passed at least 200 American Robins, 80 Western Bluebirds, 8 Cedar Waxwings, and around 30 Townsend's Solitaires. Other highlights included a Sharp-shinned Hawk, Crissal Thrasher, Rock Wren, Black-throated Sparrow, and Black-chinned Sparrow.



Evening Grosbeak by Macaulay Library

However, the co-favorites were a flock of a dozen Cassin's Finches foraging in neighboring junipers and a male Evening Grosbeak! Back at the ranger station, we were treated to very close views of Canyon Towhees & several species of sparrow: White-crowned, Chipping, Song, Lincoln's, and even a hoped for White-throated. We ended up with 41 species in all!

*Trip Leader: Mark Philippart*



I was joined by 8 folks at the **Sedona** Wetlands platform for a 1 hour sit. Highlights were the continuing Red-breasted Merganser & Western Grebe. Most of the normal ducks including the 1st Lesser Scaup were scoped and a cooperative American Pipit. Although we got 25 species it was the misses that were bizarre - no House Finch or Red-winged Blackbird or Mourning Dove or Pied-billed Grebe or Yellow-rumped Warbler.

*Trip Leader: Rich Armstrong*



American Pipit from Macaulay Library

On November 10th I was joined by 5 folks beginning in below freezing weather at the church at Bill Gray Road. However, on the 2.8 mile drive to the intersection with the **Lime Kiln trail**, it quickly warmed up, especially with early sightings of several Sagebrush Sparrows. We walked the grasslands towards Sheepshead tanks and saw Common Ravens, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Bluebirds, Western Meadowlarks, Vesper, Brewer's, and Chipping Sparrows, American Robins, and Loggerhead Shrike. The tank was empty and overgrown with teasels, but we still saw a Say's Phoebe and Black-throated Sparrows. On our return trip we had a pair of Red-tailed Hawks thermalling together, and more of the same birds. The trail was more hilly, scenic, and more productive than expected, as many birds winter in the grasslands with productive cover provided by the junipers and mesquite. All 5 said it was good times!

*Trip Leader: Tim Weber*



Red-tailed Hawks by Macaulay Library



On Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, four intrepid birders braved the early morning cold to make a trip out to **Ashurst Lake**. Upon arriving at the boat ramp, we were immediately greeted by a “flock” of four Common Loons. We eventually tallied a total of seven Loons at the lake, all seen at the same time. Looking south from the boat ramp, we noticed a fairly large group of gulls wheeling around and eventually settling down out of sight, so we headed that way to check them out. We found the flock huddled together on the shore—55 total! It was a mix of Ring-billed and California Gulls, the largest group of gulls I have ever seen in Arizona. From this vantage point, we were able to pick out two Surf Scoters who were actively diving, but everyone eventually got nice looks at them through the scope. Noticing a few gulls back up at the north end of the lake, we hopped back in the car for a second stop at the boat ramp. After a short walk, we got a better view of the gulls and a nice little group of Common Goldeneyes, the first we had seen for the season. This new spot gave us a decent view of a raft of water birds that we had seen in the middle of the lake—a mix of Western Grebes, Eared Grebes and a variety of ducks. necked Grebe amid this raft of birds! Red-necked Grebe is rare anywhere in Arizona and this is one of very few records for Coconino County. We went to the other side for some nice scope views in good light. A few other highlights of the morning included a pair of adult Bald Eagles and a noisy flock of over 100 Pinyon Jays. It turned into a beautiful windless day of spectacular birding with 26 species altogether.

*Trip Leader: Tom Hedwall*



Loons at Ashurst by Tom Hedwall



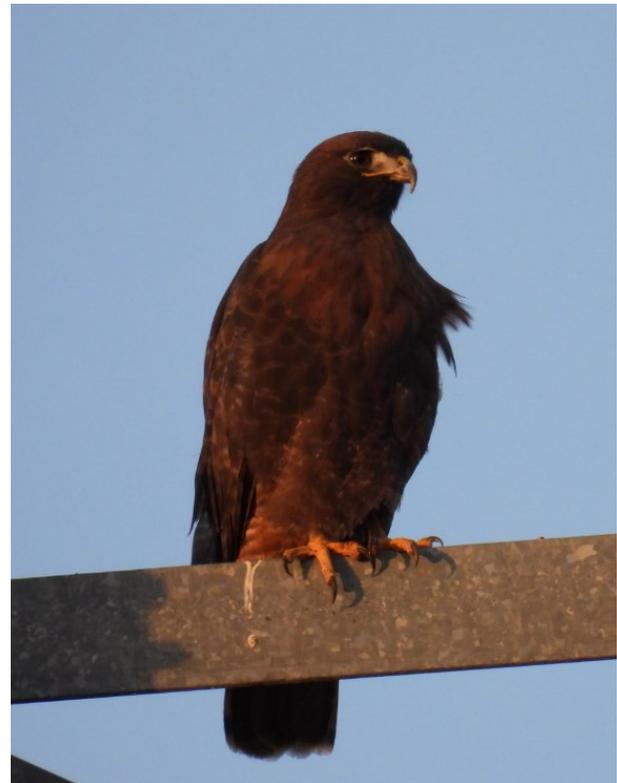
I was joined by 4 hearty birders at the **Bubbling Ponds on November 17th**. We were treated to a chilly fall morning, beautiful foliage, falling leaves and a soft energy. Winter waterfowl continue to increase on the ponds – Ring-neck Ducks, American Wigeons, Northern Shoveler, Green-winged Teal and a lone, exhausted Redhead. The Wood Ducks seem to have relocated with the invasion of migrants. Wilson’s Snipe and Killdeer hangout in the drained ponds. Local favorites abound with a stunning Vermillion Flycatcher, Belted Kingfisher, Abert’s and Spotted Towhee, Verdin, Black Phoebe, Bridled Titmouse, Ladder-backed Woodpecker and Northern Flickers. Lots of White-crowned Sparrows and American Robins with a small sprinkling of Yellow-rumped Warblers, Western Bluebirds, Lincoln’s Sparrows and one Townsend’s Solitaire. Feisty Ruby-crowned Kinglets were abundant.

*Trip Leader: Lisa Grubbs*



I was joined by 9 birders for the VVPOA field trip November 18th. It was a delight to introduce a new birding spot to our local birders. We were educated about the origin and future of the VVPOA’s nature preserve and pond, an eye opener for all. The walk revealed extensive flood rearrangement and a blockage of the river due to the invasive giant reed or arundo. We saw a remarkable dark morph Western Red-tailed Hawk, a first winter Yellow-rumped Warbler with no yellow on its head, and a Belted Kingfisher out of place back beyond the river in scrub. The habits of woodpeckers, sapsuckers, and flickers were compared and shared.

*Trip Leader: Kristin Rothrock*



Red-tailed Hawk by Macaulay Library



I was joined by 9 people on **November 20th** for a "grand tour" of the **Sedona Wetlands**. The weather was perfect: cool, clear, with little wind. We started at the big pond. In addition to the usual wintering ducks, we had 2 Common Goldeneyes, 2 Canvasbacks, 12 Eared Grebes, and a Western Grebe. A flock of over 50 Mountain Bluebirds made several visits to drink at the pond's edge. The helicopter pond was dominated by at least 58 Canvasbacks. The small back ponds were overgrown with cattails, but we still heard 2 Virginia Rails & observed 2 Marsh Wrens. Along the route we observed 5 species of raptor: Sharpshinned, Cooper's & Red-tailed Hawks, Northern Harriers, and a Peregrine Falcon. We ended back at the parking lot with a very respectable total of 47 species.

*Trip Leader Mark Philippart*



Common Goldeneye by Eric Gofreed

I was joined by 8 people for a 1 hour walk at the **Sedona Wetlands** on November 28th. Highlights were scope views of about 30 Mountain Bluebirds coming in to drink, a close cooperative Sora, a close cooperative female Cassin's Finch, a perched Red-tail hawk, male Canvasback, a distant Common Goldeneye, a posing Northern Flicker, and Western Bluebirds & American Robins everywhere.

*Trip Leader: Rich Armstrong*



Sora by Kelly Isley-Benjes



## Birds Sing to Their Eggs, and This Song Might Help Their Babies Survive Climate Change

Embryonic learning—things birds pick up from their parents while still in the egg—may play a bigger role than imagined.

Birds feeling the heat from warming weather may be able give their offspring an early weather advisory right through the eggshell—which could in turn help baby birds prepare for the forecast.

A new study shows that the songs zebra finches sing to their eggs late in development may give the young a head start in dealing with warm weather once they hatch.

Read more here: [Bird sounds and climate](#)





My name is Lyndie Mason Warner, and I am an Arizona birder, photographer, designer and writer. I spent several years chasing rare and uncommon birds that wandered into the state, and I became one of the top listers in Arizona on eBird during that time. I author a blog on my website, [LadyBirder.com](http://LadyBirder.com), which is popular among my birding and non-birding friends. I have recently published a book I believe the membership of the Northern Arizona Audubon Society would find of interest.



It's All About the Birds: The Adventures of an Arizona Birder" contains 96 pages of high-quality photos, fun facts and anecdotes about the birds I've seen and photographed and the places I've traveled to see them. It's not a professional birding guide but a memoir of my adventures and personal journey into the avian world presented in an artfully designed book.

You can find a printed copy of my book on Amazon at: [https://www.amazon.com/lts.../dp/B0BHTN37DC/ref=sr\\_1\\_1...](https://www.amazon.com/lts.../dp/B0BHTN37DC/ref=sr_1_1...)



This is new from eBird and, once again, it demonstrates the value of your eBird observations. This article presents their new bird population trending maps which show bird densities on a geographical scale. Click here to learn more: [Explore all Status and Trends species](#)

Orders and families Filter

588 SPECIES Species with Trends

ACCIPTRIFORMES 25 SPECIES

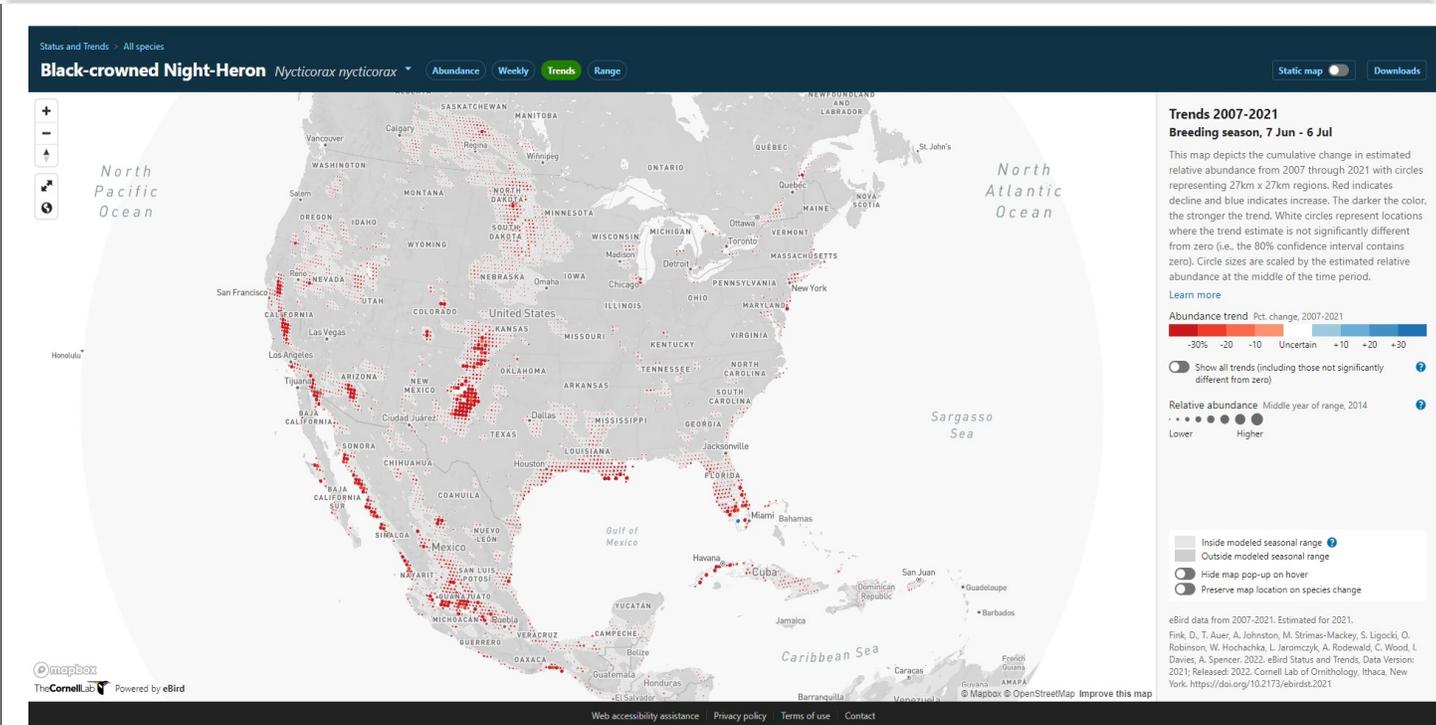
Pandionidae Osprey 1 SPECIES

Osprey *Pandion haliaetus*

Acciptridae Hawks, Eagles, and Kites 24 SPECIES

 <b>White-tailed Kite</b> <i>Elanus leucurus</i>	 <b>Swallow-tailed Kite</b> <i>Elanoides forficatus</i>	 <b>Golden Eagle</b> <i>Aquila chrysaetos</i>	 <b>Mississippi Kite</b> <i>Ictinia mississippiensis</i>	 <b>White-eyed Buzzard</b> <i>Buteo borealis</i>	 <b>Northern Harrier</b> <i>Circus hudsonius</i>	 <b>Sharp-shinned Hawk</b> <i>Accipiter striatus</i>	 <b>Cooper's Hawk</b> <i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	 <b>Northern Goshawk</b> <i>Accipiter gentilis</i>
 <b>Black Kite</b> <i>Milvus migrans</i>	 <b>Bald Eagle</b> <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	 <b>African Fish-Eagle</b> <i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>	 <b>Common Black Hawk</b> <i>Buteo gallinulus</i>	 <b>Harris's Hawk</b> <i>Parabuteo unicinctus</i>	 <b>White-tailed Hawk</b> <i>Geranoastur albicaudatus</i>	 <b>Gray Hawk</b> <i>Buteo plagiatus</i>	 <b>Red-shouldered Hawk</b> <i>Buteo lineatus</i>	 <b>Broad-winged Hawk</b> <i>Buteo platypterus</i>
 <b>Short-tailed Hawk</b> <i>Buteo brachyurus</i>	 <b>Swainson's Hawk</b> <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	 <b>Zone-tailed Hawk</b> <i>Buteo albonotatus</i>	 <b>Red-tailed Hawk</b> <i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	 <b>Rough-legged Hawk</b> <i>Buteo lagopus</i>	 <b>Ferruginous Hawk</b> <i>Buteo regalis</i>			

STRIGIFORMES 11 SPECIES





Michael Erb is a NAAS member, and a resident of Flagstaff, AZ. He is also a talented illustrator and has published a coloring book which is a good gift idea for the season. This is what he says:

*Welcome to ColorBird by Michael Erb. I'm a birder in Arizona, and I've been fascinating by these tiny feathered dinosaurs for a long time.*

*They're interesting, colorful, and wonderfully diverse.*

*Grab some colored pencils, markers, paints, or crayons and explore the world of birds!*



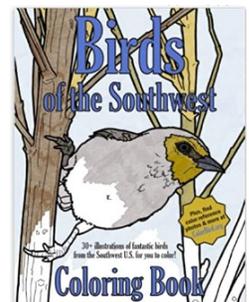
Here is a sample of the a sheet from his website:

### Verdin

With their bright yellow heads and gray bodies, Verdins are distinctive sights. These little birds dart among plants and flowers. They eat insects and may build several sphere-shaped nests each year made from twigs and other things.

PDF

PNG





## Audubon and Tree Planting at Picture Canyon Preserve

As trees go, these probably will grow fairly fast. They are boxelders and three were planted. The volunteers are from Audubon, the City of Flagstaff Open Space, and the family Alatorres which is simply committed to sustainable, carbon neutral living and so wanted to help plant trees and get their children started early in life on such concerns. This is the final stage of Audubon-promoted tree planting at Picture Canyon. A couple of months ago we planted 8 cottonwood saplings, a couple of velvet ash, and 8 Goodings willows, all of which were contributed by the NAU greenhouse, with volunteers from Audubon, NAU, Rotary Club, and City of Flagstaff Open Space doing the work. Please click on the photo below to see more about this day's work.





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Please click on this image for your invitation to the Sedona Wetlands. This video stars Rich Armstrong who is the Audubon Steward for Sedona Wetlands Preserve.

Email us at: [nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org](mailto:nazaudubon@northernarizonaaudubon.org)

What Bird Is This?

What is it? Click on this photo to find out.





**New & Renewing Members—Nov..**

Christina Behr-Andres	Clifford I Holtz
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Karen Bratsch	Michele Mattix
Jamie Coyne	Alexandre T Passos
Lydia Delventhal	Sally Reynolds
Patricia Egger	Cathy S Schneider
Denise & Rob Gibbs	Linda Jean Scott
Patti Greeneltch	Barbara Snider
Ruby L Hammond	Gerald C Snyder
Kevin L Harding	ELAINE VARGAS
Martha Jean Hetherington	James /Gloria G Wiener
Jeri Higgins	Julie Wills
	Tracy Zubrod

A personal note: This is my last issue as Editor/ Publisher of the Black Hawk Watch. It has been a labor of love.

*Fondly: Dennis Tomko*



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