

## BOOK REVIEW

**Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County, Arizona, Third Edition**, by Janet Witzeman, Troy Corman, Tommy DeBardeleben, and Laurie Nessel. 2017. Maricopa Audubon Society, Phoenix. Paperbound, spiral binding, with maps, color photography, illustrations. \$26.95. ISBN: 978-0-9654566-1-6.

*Note: Proceeds from the sale of this publication support the conservation activities of the Maricopa Audubon Society.*

Now that covid-19 may soon pass into our rear-view mirrors, maybe we can begin traveling again for work and pleasure. Even if we are still reticent to cross our thresholds, there is always planning our next trips, and this gem of a book is one for anyone interested in western birds. For those of us who are bound to spend time in place, this book would be a thoughtful addition to our libraries to familiarize ourselves with this wonderfully described southwest birding location.

As a guide and introduction to birding or locating birds within Arizona's fastest growing region, *Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County, Arizona* is excellent. Whether you are sitting in your vehicle or sitting in your chair, it is an easy-to-read, easy-to-open reference for finding birds in this bird-rich region. Whether you are a professional setting out to study a species of bird in this region or a local or traveling birder seeking birds to see, photograph, or record, this book serves admirably.

The book also addresses the past 25 years of changes in avian populations, ranges, and the status of birds around Phoenix. The changes summarized in this section of five pages reflect important themes that resonate far beyond Arizona, such as the decimation of the Red-faced Warbler, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Steller's Jay, and Mountain Chickadee by fire, and a surge of many waterbirds, including nesting Neotropical Cormorants and Bald Eagles, with establishment of new ponds and lakes.

*Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County* is divided into three major sections: specific birding areas with descriptions and the birds that might be found there, descriptions of habitats for the entire county, and species accounts with bar graphs depicting each species' seasonal occurrence. There is also a section updating and photographically documenting the species new to Maricopa County since publication of the second edition in 1997. The briefer sections (acknowledgments, foreword, etc.) detail the motivation for the original and subsequent editions of the book and changes in the region in the last 25 years. Another brief section describes two major nearby birding areas in abutting Pinal County (a thoughtful touch) with a thorough alphabetical index to those areas and expected species.

The maps in *Birds of Phoenix and Maricopa County* are excellent and have well contrasting backgrounds and print. The roads are well marked. The fold-out map of the county's major road systems is easy to read, and the major routes are clearly and accurately depicted. It also melds accurately with the maps within the text that divides the area covered into seven regions: Phoenix and Scottsdale, Southeast of Phoenix, Northeast of Phoenix 1, Northeast of Phoenix 2, Southwest of Phoenix, Northwest of Phoenix, and Pinal County. Directions for reaching each area are clear, and the specific locations are easily located on the corresponding map for that section. The authors have also included a map of the entire state of Arizona, depicting and naming all counties, an aid to geographic orientation that is sometimes overlooked in state and county birding guides. Two color maps depict Maricopa County's topography and habitats. The major and some minor roads and waterways are included in these maps too, but, unfortunately, some lettering on these maps, including the road numbers, has been reduced to a size difficult for some of us to read. Also, for those who thrive on using GPS coordinates, there are none.

## BOOK REVIEW

The text in the section describing the region's habitats is well organized and well written, accompanied by photographs of both the habitat and representative birds. The descriptions allow the readers to visualize where they should park and the terrain over which they will walk. The authors address what is important to the local, seasoned traveler, or newcomer to Arizona. Trails, facilities, accessibility, hours, directions, fees, and phone numbers, if pertinent, are included. [Restrictions for the covid-19 pandemic may have affected operating hours.] The species accounts, bar graphs, and their legends are likewise clear, concise, and easy to read. The bar graphs, about 8 to 10 per page, are in easily readable short lists, with the species account on the facing page or below, so the information is unified conveniently.

Notably, the authors, themselves experts in their fields, sought out leaders in western field ornithology for pre-publication review, and their careful attention to detail shows. The sections some readers might frequently skip are just as carefully written and as descriptive as the main text. The photography, in nearly all instances, is well reproduced. The reader should keep it in mind that some of these photographs were taken for documentation and not as portraits. The book's interior pages are printed on heavy, coated paper meant to stand years of handling, and so is the cover (with its original cover art of a Le Conte's Thrasher by Narca Moore-Craig).

Maricopa Audubon is to be congratulated to have published such a fine book and guide that describes its area so well in terms of the birds, the landscape the birds live in, and how the avian life of the area has fared in the unparalleled urban/suburban growth that Maricopa County has become. This publication was an act of love for those who volunteered to work on it and their devotion shines through on every page.

*Catherine Waters*