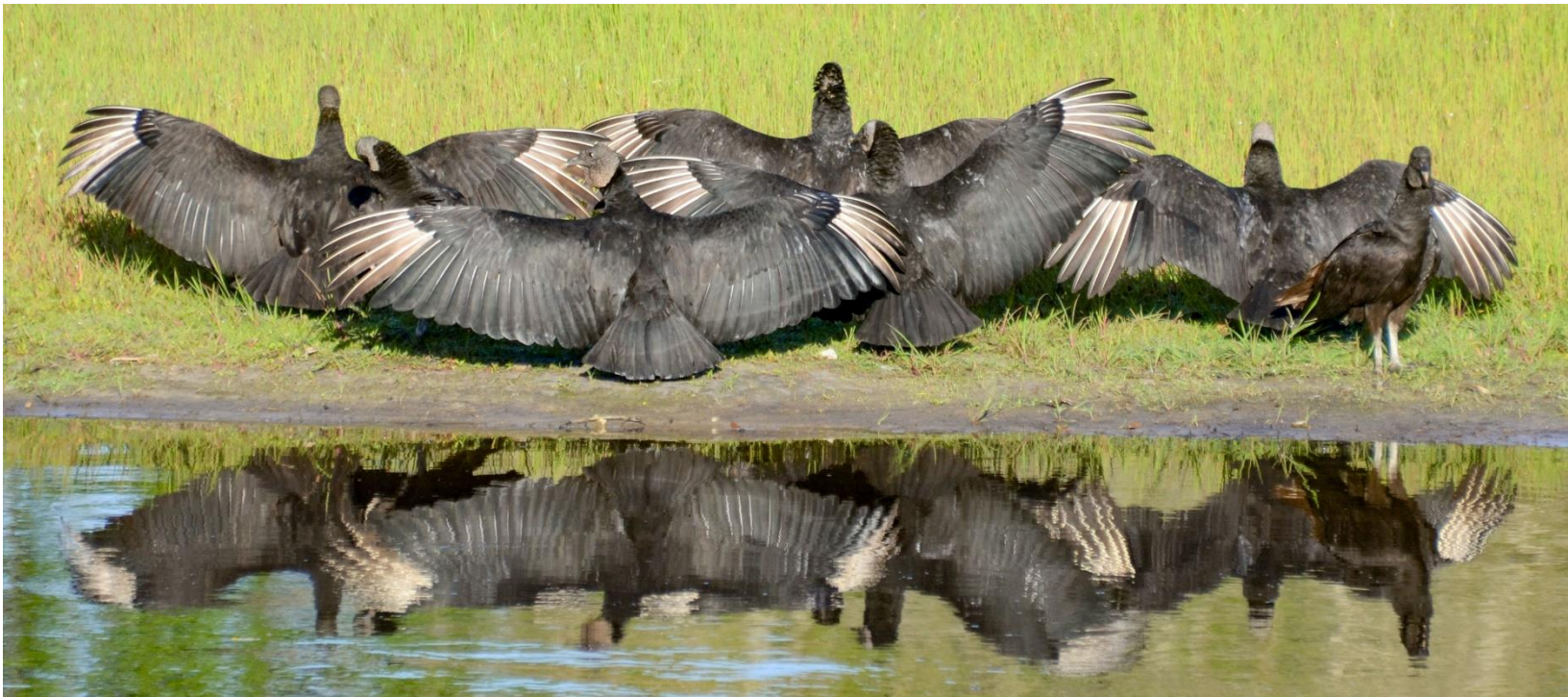


The Broadwing



Publication of the Montclair Bird Club
March 2021

Montclair, NJ
Volume LXVI, Number 7

President's Message March 2021

While we wait for the pandemic to end and travel to begin, it is time to plan our next trip. Starting this month, *The Broadwing* will highlight birding locations. This issue highlights Casa de San Pedro in Hereford, AZ. If you have a favorite location, send me the contact information. The feature story also takes place in Arizona, but a bit farther north.

For a change this month, we also offer poetry, Wayne Greenstone's "Vera Cruz."

Sandy

Next meeting: Wednesday, March 10
Virtual Bird Walk: Thursday, March 18

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Birds in Your Purse



Golden Eagle



Frigatebird



Snowy Egret



Flamingo



Peregrine Falcon



Hoopoe



Kotuku or white heron



Peregrine Falcon



Kiwi



Manucodia, New Guinea



Falcon



Bird of paradise

Virtual Bird Walk

The theme of the March 18 Virtual Bird Walk is *Little Birds*. You get to define “little.”

Participants will be able to share their screens or email their pictures for inclusion in a group PowerPoint.

If you plan to send them to me at MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com, photos should be less than 2mb each, and sent at least three days in advance of the meeting.



A rarely seen image of gulls guarding a new member of the flock that happens to be too little to defend itself.

ALDROVANDI'S BIRDS
RICK WRIGHT, PH.D.
7:00–8:00 PM, THURSDAYS



As we approach the 500th anniversary of the birth of Ulisse Aldrovandi, that consummate humanist's massive encyclopedia is increasingly recognized as the greatest product of Italian natural history. The three lavishly illustrated volumes dedicated to birds, published beginning in 1599, cover far more than mere avian physiology, preserving popular superstitions, classical myths, learned allegories, and etymological fantasies. We will read and

translate selected excerpts from this treasure trove. For intermediate students of Latin. All assigned texts are available at no charge on line.

TELEPAIDEIA

https://www.paideiainstitute.org/online_classes



Arizona Hotspots Part I

A Ring around Phoenix

Michael Sheldon



Last year at this time, my wife and I were just returning from a six-week escape from winter in Arizona. Dark rumors were emanating from Wuhan and northern Italy, and we felt lucky to get home safely. Looking back, that seems like a golden age of innocent, blissful birding. Thus, late last year, when the editor of *The Broadwing* asked if I would contribute articles, Arizona nostalgia seemed like something many of us could enjoy together. As many of you know much more about these places and species than I do, the focus will be photographic.

Let's start, like I did, in Maricopa County. Phoenix gets no respect, and the whole area lurks in the shadow of southeast Arizona. (I'll get to Pima and Cochise Counties in future articles.) Nevertheless, there are great hotspots that ring the Phoenix metro area.

Surprise and the White Tank Mountain Regional Park

We stayed in a casita on a U-pick citrus farm in a rural part of Surprise, west of the 303 Loop. Exciting times for newcomers as we saw Gila woodpeckers, verdins, and Abert towhees for the first time. The highlight was my first and all-time best look at an American kestrel.



In the nearby White Tank Mountains, it was easy to see local standbys such as cactus wrens, loggerhead shrikes, and curve-billed thrashers. I particularly enjoyed these black-throated sparrows, trying to hold a minyan at the local watering hole.



Glendale Recharge Ponds

The Glendale Recharge Ponds sit just to the east of Luke Air Force Base. It can be noisy when the pilots are training, but the ponds are a great place to see migrating shorebirds in season. It was quiet in January, but I did spot a clay-colored sparrow, and a Say phoebe followed me for a while, displaying its aerial talents.



Tres Rios Overbank Wetlands



Tres Rios is another water treatment facility, due south of Glendale. We headed there hoping to see the reported least bittern and neotropic cormorants. Cormorants were there in numbers. And instead of the bittern, we came across a happy-to-pose juvenile black-crowned night-heron. But the star of Tres Rios was this white-faced ibis.

Gilbert Water Ranch

The different riparian habitats at Gilbert Water Ranch make this site a major attraction to a variety of birds and the county's top hot spot. On one visit we sat on a park bench to eat our lunch; during the half hour we were there, we observed 11 different species. Highlights included American avocets and an ultra-friendly blue-gray gnatcatcher.



Desert Botanical Garden



What didn't make sense was the exhibition of brightly-colored oversized geometric plastic sculptures disfiguring the place. Something new will have taken their place when you're there next . . . and you'll be able to see a beautiful Costa hummingbird like this male.

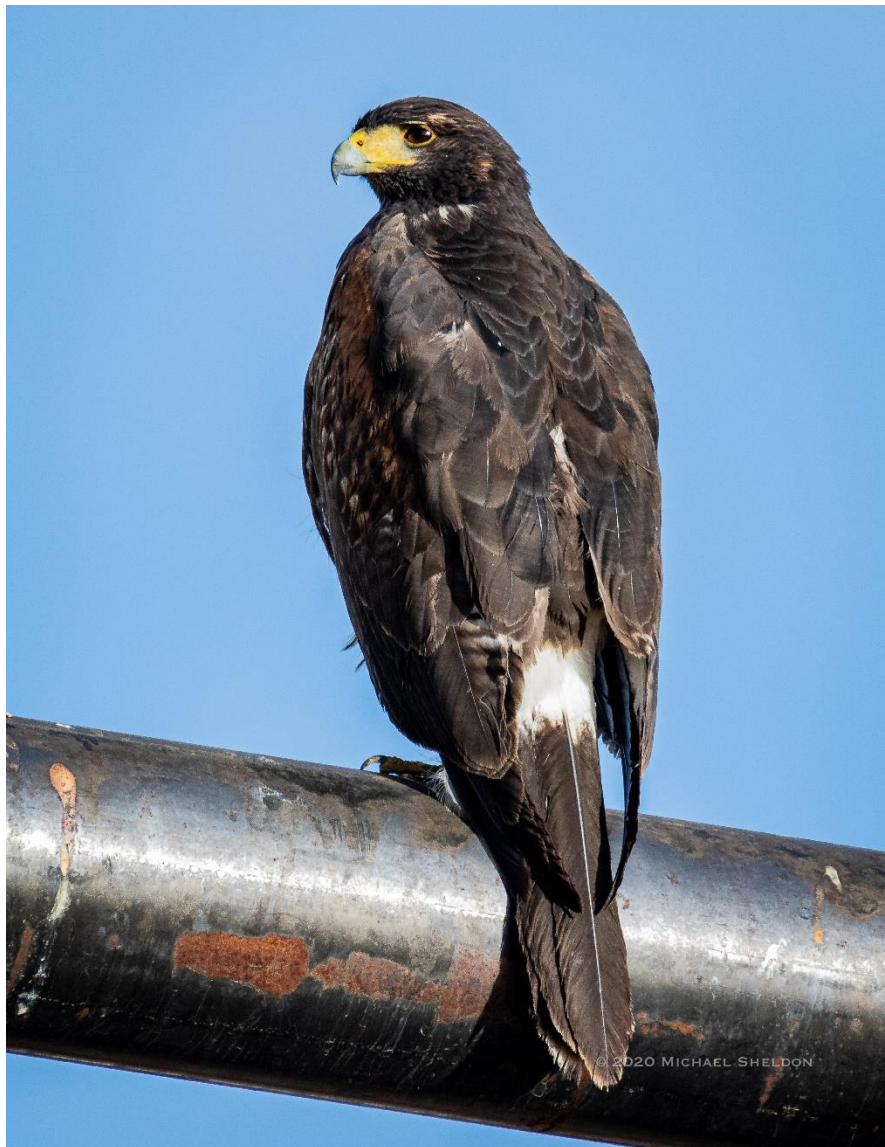
Rio Verde Valley



Northeast Scottsdale is an interesting part of the metro area, with a checkerboard of high-end resorts and tumbledown ranches accessed by deeply rutted dirt roads. It was in front of one of these ranches that we saw our first Harris hawk. Following the Rio Verde to its confluence with the Salt River, you arrive at the Phon D Sutton Recreation Area. Here a lone sora waited for the last raft trip of the day, then popped out to work a mayfly hatch that lasted more than an hour and a half. Thinking I might never get such a good look again, I stayed there the whole time, taking more than 500 exposures.

Hassayampa River Preserve

Circling back around to the northwest, you can visit the Hassayampa River Preserve—but only on days when it is open. That said, I can guarantee that one sighting has eluded him: the Hassayampa elegant wheaten!



100-Word Essay Winner

Winner: Benita Fishbein

Camping in Delaware this fall, David and I put out seed for the campground birds. We watched as nuthatches and chickadees cautiously approached the table and snuck a seed from the far end, running off to partake of their treat. “Look down!” David whispered. There, by my foot, stood a fearless Carolina Wren, giving me the once-over with one eye before she blithely stepped on my foot and went about her merry way. While she was there, I felt the slightest, barest impression of a tiny fluff of weight on my toe, or was I just imagining that?

Anna Karapin-Springorum

A blustery January morning found two thoroughly chilled birders standing on the edge of a seaweed-strewn beach, frozen fingers focusing binoculars on a spectacle in the sky. What had been an exclamation of “Look, a Peregrine falcon!” quickly became, “And there, it’s chasing a woodcock!” And as the two birds streaked across the sky, “It’s gaining, isn’t it?” followed by a tense silence as both braced themselves for a bloody end. But the woodcock dropped from the sky voluntarily. “It’s headed for the shrubs!” The falcon plummeted, but rose, empty-clawed—“that was damn close”—from what should have been lunch.

Sandy Sorkin

I should always bird with rank amateurs. When you have only walked a short distance and a sora peaks through the reeds and poses directly in front of you for a picture, you know you are birding with an amateur. You explain to the beginner that this is an amazing first bird on his first day and will probably be the best bird of the day, only to have a Virginia rail stroll from the reeds and make a liar out of you. At that point you shut up and try to find another beginner to bird with you tomorrow.

Donna Traylor

Birds are a lifestyle. Who’s at the yard feeders? Did you see that sharpie streak by as we were driving? Check out the local refuge for seasonal visitors. Need a change of scenery—let’s go to south Jersey and see what’s different. Load up the camper with field guides and optics and journey afar. What’s great along the way are the new friends made when sharing that hummingbird sighting in Arizona or the invitation to camp in the yard of the person with the rare species. It’s being outdoors and learning about everything that flies, walks, and crawls. Birds started this!

Rick Wright

Birders are a scrappy lot. 250 years ago, two men went to court to settle an ornithological dispute. One claimed to have engaged the other to teach a new-fledged starling to sing and speak. What was returned months later was a merle—full-grown, healthy, but not a starling. The owner sued for his starling; the trainer countersued for his fee, claiming that the bird entrusted to him was misidentified. No word on who won. But how disappointing to send a fledgling off to finishing school and have it return not as the songster of your dreams but a mere blackbird.



OWL ETIQUETTE

It seems that everyone wants to see an owl! And while everyone should have the opportunity to do so, it is important to remember that owls are nocturnal birds who need undisturbed rest during the day. Because Snowy Owls often roost on the ground, their rest can easily be disturbed. Please treat owls with care and respect by following these simple guidelines:

- Respect beach habitat by staying on designated paths and refraining from climbing on dunes. Limit your time at a roost site.
- Do not play tapes to attract owls, entice them with bait, or shine flashlights on them at night. They can be seen perfectly well during the daytime.
- Allow them their rest by keeping a respectful distance away and by remaining quiet.
- Leave your pets at home, and help to educate young children about the importance of being quiet and not disturbing the owl.
- Do not share sensitive owl locations with unknown people in large public forums such as Twitter.
- Help to educate others—especially beginner birders—and promote responsible birding behavior.
- In this critical time of the coronavirus pandemic, be sure to maintain a safe social distance from others in the crowds that owls may attract, and always wear a mask to help prevent the spread of the virus.

The Linnaean Society of New York • <https://www.linnaeannewyork.org>

Meatier meals and more playtime might reduce cats' toll on wildlife



By Jonathan Lambert

Science News, February 11, 2021

Surprisingly simple measures might keep domestic cats from killing a lot of wildlife.

Estimates vary, but it's likely that [billions of birds](#) and mammals succumb each year to our outdoor-ranging feline friends (*SN: 1/29/13*). Calls to keep cats indoors are often contentious among cat owners, and cats can sometimes reject colorful collars or loud bells designed to make them more noticeable.

But a meat-rich diet or a few minutes of hunting-like play each day can [significantly reduce the amount of wildlife they bring home](#), researchers report February 11 in *Current Biology*.

Interventions that reduce cat predation and have buy-in from cat owners "are so important because we're just decimating bird populations," says Susan Willson, an ecologist at St. Lawrence University in

Canton, NY, who wasn't involved in the study. While preliminary, she says, this study shows that "simply feeding your cat a high-meat diet might actually work."

Most attempts to curb cats' impact on wildlife have focused on restricting cat behavior and their ability to hunt. But Robbie McDonald, an ecologist at the University of Exeter in Cornwall, England, and his colleagues investigated the root of the problem: the urge to go out hunting in the first place. "We wanted to find out why well-fed cats might still kill wildlife," he says.

The team reasoned this urge might stem from natural instincts to hunt or from a need for cats to supplement their diet. Cats are carnivores, and some cat foods might not be meeting all of a cat's needs, McDonald says. If either of these influence hunting behavior, then perhaps beefing up

the amount of meat in a cat's diet or mimicking hunting behavior through play could fulfill those needs without the collateral damage to wildlife.

McDonald and his colleagues tested these new interventions on 355 domestic cats in 219 households in England's southwest. Only known hunters were enrolled, and owners first tallied up every bird, mammal, or other critter their cats brought home for seven weeks, to establish a baseline for each cat.

Owners then implemented one of a handful of interventions for six weeks: switching to a grain-free, high-meat commercially available food; playing for five to ten minutes each day; putting their cat's normal food in a puzzle feeder; or using existing methods like bells or Birdsbesafe collars. Some owners didn't change anything but continued tracking their cats.

Cats fed the meat-rich diet brought home 36 percent less prey on average than they did before the diet change, the team calculated. For instance, a cat that normally brings home a daily catch would instead return about 20 critters a month. "This might not seem like very much," McDonald says of the drop. But "a very large cat population means that if this average were applied across the board, it would result in very many million fewer deaths."

Felines treated to playtime, which consisted of owners getting their cats to stalk, chase, and pounce on a feather toy and then giving cats a mouse toy to bite, returned 25 percent less prey, though that drop was mostly in mammals, not birds. Cats that

started using puzzle feeders actually brought home more wildlife. Bells had no discernible effect, while cats fitted with Birdsbesafe collars brought home 42 percent fewer birds but roughly the same number of mammals, which [aligns with previous research](#).

"We were surprised diet change had such a strong effect," McDonald says, in part because the cat's pretreatment diets were all variable. "Nutrition seems to have some bearing on a cat's tendency to kill things, and some cats that hunt may need something extra" that's provided by a meatier diet, he says. McDonald is already working to pinpoint what that extra something might be.

"It's a robust study that I hope is followed up with more research," says Willson, the St. Lawrence ecologist. Because the study focused on prey brought home, it could be missing wildlife killed and eaten or left outside, she says.

The surest way to prevent cats from killing wildlife is to keep them indoors, McDonald says. While many cat owners care about wildlife, they also resist such restrictions as unnatural for their cat. But McDonald found these new interventions were less controversial. After the trial, 33 percent of participants reported they planned to continue feeding their cats meat-rich diets, and 76 percent reported they'd play more with their cats.

"We hope that owners of cats that hunt consider trying these changes," McDonald says. "It's good for conservation and good for cats."

VERA CRUZ

On the clearest mountain night
Ice stars poke the canopy
Until the cloth sears white.

And so the hawks arrive
At Vera Cruz, flowing
Through the heart,
Passages of rhyme
There is reason in the river.

Overhead, the streams,
The lifelines emerge
From the foothill's haze

Through the dense air,
Column upon column
Swirling higher, out of sight.
Flight lines cross the city,
Darkening day, beckoning life.

The hawks have arrived
At Vera Cruz, the true cross
Lost by Cortes for God and gold,
The currents refreshed in flight.

They pass on, the hawks,
To winter in the light
Of stars, as the pulse wanes,
The three-minute warning

Diminishes desire. Focus
On the flight, the wingbeat,
Before the eyelids collide.

Soar, banded tail flaired,
Higher than time. Repeat,
Repeat after me, the hawks
Have arrived at Vera Cruz.

The woman with the basket
On her head, as we sit
By the side of the road,
Cold cerveza in hand, heads

Spinning from visions, points
Towards the river, where death
Roosts for the night. She speaks
Of dark birds on bare trees
Pregnant with murmuring fruit.

The light is dimming now,
Air dense with raptors,
The flutter of dark wing beats
In circles constrict, descend
On limbs branches, feet scraping

Branches clean. The current flattens,
Scatters in dusky halos, as sky turns
To night before night.

Engine roaring, we sweat in the dark
As the wind whistles through our cabin.
We are guests of Montezuma tonight.
The oropendolas exhale gold mist,
That coats their tails in flight.

The lights of town appear, church
Bells ring, a saxophone wails
From a side street, a ball bounces
Across the paved town square
As couples dance to the blackbirds' wail.

The barn owl silent
Lands on the roof
Eats flies away.

We stand in awe
Beyond contemplation.
Before there was a dream
There were the hawks.

Our hearts pound
At the edge of discovery,
A mystery revealed, the gold
Dazzles, shutting eyes.

A sweet kiss descends
On the road to Catemaco.

Notes of colored birds
Resonate in splendid forests,
Lush hillsides ringed by despair.

As the rains heave absolution
The wind shrieks from the sea,
Ripping trees, roots skyward.

We take shelter with the children,
Break bread in their patient grace.
The truck, swollen with evacuees,
Stops not. They wait for whenever.

A toucan appears in the rain,
Escapes the deep green
Flashes its colors,
Disappears once more.

The bells are chiming. The square
Filled with soldiers, young lovers,
Children selling chicklets, a stuffed
Armadillo stiffens under the thief's arm.

The petty, the sublime, the frantic
Convergence where the birds stream
And the music soars, the hawks
Have returned to Vera Cruz, the river
In our veins flows on.

Vera Cruz, 1995

Wayne Greenstone

Gulls to Great Auks: An Art Exhibit and Lecture Program

January 22 – May 14, 2021
Fairfield University Art Museum
Fairfield, CT

Several of the online lectures in this series are sure to interest
Montclair Bird Club members. [For the full program, click here.](#)



A new chameleon species may be the world's tiniest reptile. Found in Madagascar, *Brookesia nana* is less than 30 millimeters long.

January 28 in *Scientific Reports*

Birds in This Issue

- Page 1: Black vultures
- Page 5: American kestrel, black-throated sparrow, Say phoebe
- Page 6: White-faced ibis, American avocet, Costa hummingbird, sora
- Page 7: Harris hawk
- Page 16: Vermilion Flycatcher, barn owl, Bullock oriole

Consumer Guide to Window-Strike Prevention

Being a member of a bird club means that you are frequently asked about preventing bird window strikes. The link below contains a very comprehensive guide that can be shared.

[Bird Friendly Yards](#)

A Birdwatcher's Dream on the San Pedro River
Casa de San Pedro, Hereford, AZ
www.BedsandBirds.com

Built in the style of territorial haciendas and old inns in Mexico and Spain, Casa de San Pedro B&B is ideally situated on the banks of the San Pedro River, adjacent to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, which projects 40 miles of the river north from the Casa.



The surrounding habitat attracts more than 334 species of birds, 82 species of mammals, and 47 species of amphibians and reptiles. This represents roughly half of the regularly occurring species in North America. The surrounding mountain ranges (the Huachucas, Mules, and Chiricahuas in the US and the Cerro San José just across the border in Mexico) are romantically called the “Sky Islands.” From the San Pedro River through grasslands and to mountain foothills and canyons, the habitats change significantly, affording multiple opportunities to spot different species in each zone. On short treks from the Casa one can easily spot 180 species of birds in a couple of days at almost any time of year.

There are many bird guides in the area, as SE Arizona is one of the top five birding destinations in the US. The dark skies of southeast Arizona are equally well known to astronomers. Casa de San Pedro is located at the end of the paved road, in a very rural area, providing a habitat that is both quiet and close to nature. The inn features 10 guest rooms with modern amenities. Each room is located off a central courtyard with fountain and bird feeders and native plantings. The decor of the inn features Mexican hand-carved furnishings.

The area really has five distinct seasons, each with overlapping populations of birds.



Winter birding (December to mid-March) features overwintering hawks, eagles, sparrows in abundance, and flocks of Sandhill Cranes and geese/ducks/teal, and flocks of sandhill cranes and waterfowl at Whitewater Draw.

Spring migration (mid-March to mid-May) brings waves of spring migrants northbound, following the San Pedro River (a lone green stripe on the map, guiding the migrating birds).

Summer (mid-May to late July) is the season of colorful birds with the Casa logo bird, the Vermilion Flycatcher that frequents nearby perches.



Hummingbird and monsoon season (August to September). One can easily see twelve to fifteen species of hummers between the mountains and grassland, bombarding feeders and the native flowers that bloom in the welcome, cooling rains of summer. These monsoon rains turn the valleys green and lush in our “second spring.”

Fall (October to November) is when the seasons change over, and the dance of migration takes summer birds south and wintering birds return to our area.



The MBC Bulletin Bird

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[SMILE.AMAZON.COM](https://www.amazon.com/Smile)

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THE BROADWING

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Send photos, field notes, or articles to the editor at
MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com.

From the Editor's Desk

Please feel free to email me with any items you would like included in future issues of *The Broadwing*. Please include pictures and any other news that will reduce anxiety and make us smile.

MontclairBirdClub100@gmail.com



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