

# Desert Dwellers

Volume 6, Issue 1

March 2003

## Neighborhood UPDATE

- **Oracle Foothills Monument:** Located at the corner of Oracle Road and Genematas Drive, this historic monument was restored and improved by our neighbors. Pima County would now like OFNA to take ownership and liability for the monument, a very expensive proposition for our organization. We continue our discussion with Pima County .
- **Rudasill/Genematas Intersection:** At the last Board Meeting, representatives from Pima County made a presentation on the County's plans to straighten the intersection in order to reduce the accident rate. Many questions were raised by the neighbors present regarding the need for such drastic and expensive solutions. With the County's current budget crisis, the plan is at least several years away. Meanwhile, the county has installed more signage and pavement markers in an attempt to slow traffic on Rudasill Road.
- **Tea Room Parking:** The owners of Chantilly Tea Room continue working with OFNA to improve the parking situation. More employee parking has been created to reduce the on-street parking which hampered traffic flow on Genematas Dr.
- **Neighborhood Streets:** OFNA is working with Pima County to fill potholes and shoulders, and to repave the streets. Again, with money tight in the county, repaving may be out of the question this year. OFNA is also planning to trim vegetation along the roadways to improve sight lines and increase safety of walkers and bikers, as well as drivers.
- **Friendly Village Wash:** The plan to channelize the wash in order to provide more developable land for apartments is still in the hands of the Corps of Engineers. They have yet to approve the applicants' plans.
- **Annexation:** There seems to be little effort on the part of the City of Tucson to annex north of River Road to include our subdivision. At our annual meeting in September, representatives from the City indicated that the city would act on a request to be annexed, but probably would not be interested in our area unless it was part of a larger target area. With our large properties and small tax base, tax revenue would not offset the cost of street maintenance, fire and police protection, and garbage services.
- **Annual Picnic:** The Board will be appointing the committee for the 2003 Picnic soon. All volunteers are welcome!

### Board Meeting

The upcoming meeting of the OFNA Board of Directors will be:

Monday, March 31, 7:00 pm

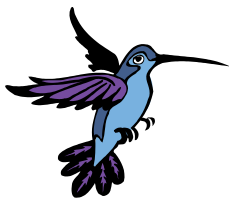
5646 N. Genematas Dr. (the home of Vera Uyehara)

Call Vera for directions - 408-1312

Or

Jay DeAngeli, 690-1107, for any other questions

Board Meetings are OPEN to all



## Backyard Birding

Southern Arizona is a fabulous place to be if you love watching birds. Avid birdwatchers make the pilgrimage to our mountains and deserts from all over the world, checking off species on their life lists. But you don't need to go to Ramsay Canyon or the Chiracauhuas to enjoy the marvelous variety of birds that inhabit our world. Just venture out into your back yard.

My sister is the *real* bird-watcher in our family, the Audubon chapter leader who has been on numerous trips around the world to view and count exotic birds. I, on the other hand, take a more casual, though no less passionate, approach. Armed with a pair of binoculars and a guidebook, I relax by the pool while studying and attempting to identify all of the feathered visitors. Their beauty and antics keep me entertained by the hour. . .

Every afternoon like clockwork, the **doves** arrive for their daily handout of grain. Most of the year we have **mourning** and **Inca** doves, but in the summer they are joined by the huge and voracious **white-wings** that migrate north from Mexico. Spring brings the mournful cooing of courtship and the building of spindly nests in every nook and cranny, which soon are overflowing with mother and baby doves. **Gambel's quail** are also regular visitors, soon bringing their very large families trailing behind. Before long you will need to watch for the tiny ones crossing the road in hot pursuit of their parents. Noisy **starlings** make their nests in vacant saguaro holes, and **house finches** and **black-throated sparrows** come and go all day. It's fun to watch the **black phoebe** swooping down over the pool to catch bugs lingering there. I have a love-hate relationship with the squawking, audacious **Gila woodpeckers**; I love it when they pound out their jackhammer tune on my rain gutter, and hate it when they quickly empty the hummingbird feeders. The closely-related **northern flicker** occasionally

stops by, and I once even spotted a **ladder-backed woodpecker** in a nearby ocotillo.

The **northern cardinal** is the most startlingly beautiful visitor to our feeder, the intense red of the male always a delight to see. Not long ago we watched as the male filled his beak with sunflower seeds, jumped back to the fence where his female partner waited, and proceeded to feed her. Often mistaken for the cardinal is the **pyrrhuloxia**, whose shape, size and crest are so similar to the cardinal. The color of the male, however, is closer to the color of the female cardinal, grayish body with red markings. Both will sing for long periods of time while perched in our large trees. Rivaling the beauty of the cardinal is the jet-black male **phainopepla**, who seldom stays for long, and rarely sings for us. He prefers the small berries of the mistletoe to the seeds and grains we feed the other birds. No songbird can compete with the **northern mockingbird**, whose complicated melodies can go on for hours. The mockingbirds are quite happy feeding on the red berries of the pyracantha bush. The tiny **verdin** appears regularly trying to coax the syrup out of the hummingbird feeder, the size of his voice far outweighing his small frame. Now that I have a thistle feeder hanging in the mulberry tree, the beautiful **American goldfinches** come and go all day long, their sweet lilting voice and bright yellow feathers adding immense pleasure and beauty to my backyard birding experience.



You can't miss the loud and distinctive *whit-WHEET* call of the **curve-billed thrasher**, but did you also know this bird has a lovely, melodic song as well? He's not much to look at, with his piercing yellow eyes and dull brownish coat, but he surely can sing. The curious and fearless **cactus wren** has

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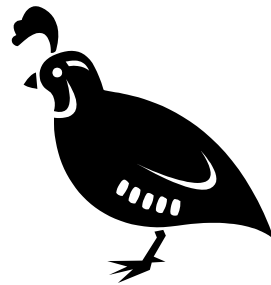
perhaps the most personality of all my backyard birds. He will go anywhere in search of some new delicacy – in the open window of a car, inside the front grille on a car, into the pool net. The marvelous, tightly-woven nests you see among the cholla cactus are those of the cactus wren. They use these nests for roosting, and often will take an old one apart to build a new one. The strange call of the cactus wren is a defining sound of the Sonoran desert.

A long-dead eucalyptus tree serves as a perch for some very interesting visitors to our yard. It frequently becomes a resting spot for **hawks** looking for a meal – **Harris'**, **Swainson's**, and even an occasional **red-tailed**. When all the other birds in the yard scatter, I know the **Coopers'** hawk must be nearby, looking to make a meal of a dove or other small bird. The one I love the most, however, is the small, colorful **American kestrel**. A magnificent **great horned owl** has also been known to frequent those bare limbs in the early evening as dusk settles in. Very early in the mornings we will sometimes awake to his deep "hoo hoo-hoo-hoo hoo". Speaking of owls, one year we were lucky to have been chosen as the temporary home for an adorable little **screech owl** who spent his days roosting in a vine under our front roof overhang. As evening would approach, he would move to a tree in front of our window, sit for a while, and then take off for his nightly hunt. We would hear his call when he returned to the roost around 3 a.m. I think

he finally tired of all the noisy daytime activity in our front entryway and moved on to a quieter neighborhood.

As we enjoy the magnificent sunsets from the backyard, the nighthawks come swooping low over the pool in search of insect prey. I believe these are the **lesser nighthawks**, as their low-flying habits would suggest. No, they're not really birds, but **bats** are also part of the evening flying spectacle.

Of all the birds I am privileged to host, none pleases me more than the **hummingbirds**. From before sunup until almost dark, they dash and dart from perch to feeder, chasing away any newcomer or perceived intruder to *their* nectar. **Anna's**, **Costas** and **black-chinned** I have identified, although I'm never quite sure, especially with the females.



Warm weather brings the return of the huge **black vultures**, circling lazily overhead, waiting for a little roadkill. Once in a while, if we are very lucky, the **roadrunner** will stop by our yard for few minutes, making us smile at his silly antics.

Sit in your backyard for an hour and see who drops by. In a stressful and uncertain world, there can be no more peaceful and relaxing time. I would love to know if you've seen someone I haven't mentioned here. *Enjoy!*

*Carole DeAngeli*



*Newsletter Notes* ~ This newsletter is published 4 times annually. If you have comments, suggestions, criticisms, or would like to contribute an article, please contact: **Carole DeAngeli, 690-1107, ejdeangeli@earthlink.net**

## Welcome to all our New Neighbors!

If you are new to Oracle Foothills, we welcome you to the neighborhood. **OFNA** is a volunteer organization working to bring neighbors together, to keep them informed of issues affecting us all, and to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood. Membership in **OFNA** is open to all and your support and participation are greatly encouraged. Please contact any of the Board Members listed on the back page for more information.

## *Reaters*



If you love to read and you love to eat, you really should be joining the neighborhood book club! We meet on the last Wednesday of the month at various homes in the neighborhood to discuss the book selection and share a wonderful potluck dinner. Our next meeting will be at the home of Becky Huddleston, 5601N. Maria Dr. on June 25th. The book selection is *Africa Solo* by Kevin Kertscher, and the food will be African.

If this interests you, please contact  
**Kim Peterson at 888-5199.**



**OFNA MEMBERSHIP \$50 PER YEAR**

**SEND TO:**

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