



## Birdwatcher clocks seasonal visits

The Conservation Committee held its first Fall meeting on Sept. 21 at the home of President Nan Byrne. When Desert Place editor Nancy Laizure sought to line up contributors for this column, those who write more thoughtful articles were reluctant to volunteer for this issue because of the time element. That gave me a perfect opportunity to put in a bid, and with no other takers Nancy had no choice but to accept.

Last month I wrote of several species of birds and I'd like to report what we've seen of these since. The last quail broods to hatch and appear at our feed and water were all small in numbers — perhaps this is normal. From Aug. 5 to the 13th, pairs came in with broods of 1, 2, and 3. The single chick that appeared on Aug. 13 is now half grown.

The male Scott's oriole made himself scarce after Aug. 7, but now and then I catch a faint hint of his breeding season song. On Sept. 9 he showed up again for a very thorough bath. The Mexican jays disappeared early in September and by the 11th their place had been taken by scrub jays. While the poor-will continues to call each night, we hadn't expected to see one before dark, if ever. But on Aug. 13 and again on Sept. 9 one started calling at dusk, perched on a low stub about 50 yards away, its white nick ring conspicuous as it called.

I don't know how many distinctive calls the roadrunner has in its repertoire — we recognize three. It wasn't until late in August that one gave its Bronx cheer just outside the window so that we could see the final sound is made by a rapid clacking of its bill. Just the other day one was moving a

scrub jay around in a mesquite, following it from branch to branch.

We thought we would witness quite a variety of birds passing through in the Fall migration, but other than a few immature Rufous hummingbirds the only migrant we've had was a female black-headed grosbeak on Sept. 6. It hung around all afternoon in spite of being moved around some in a mesquite by a resident cactus wren. But the change in season has brought about an influx of screech and great-horned owls, and of sparrow, Cooper's and red-tailed hawks and doubtless of others we fail to recognize.

And here I was going to quit, but when I turned off the machine and stood up I learned of another roadrunner sound. Two, of different size, were putting on a display just under the window, facing each other several feet apart with an intervening turpentine bush, making croaking sounds, the smaller of the two crouching with wings half-spread; the larger doing a good deal of tail-pumping. So?

Lastly, it would ease my conscience to make a couple of corrections. Previously I wrote of Utah juniper in Tonto Hills. Gladys took one look at the branching from the root collar and opined that they were more likely oneseed juniper. I just stepped out and collected a few of the berries and cut into a couple, and sure enough, one seed. The book says that oneseed berries are usually under ¼-inch in size, and Utah over ¼-inch and that fits too. I also wrote that graythorn had dropped out by this elevation, and that was just senility, for I've seen them here on the property.

Frank Casanova