



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Montezuma Castle and Tuzigoot
National Monuments
POB 219
Camp Verde, AZ 86322
928-567-5276
fax 928-567-3597

National Park Service News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – APRIL 15, 2010
ED CUMMINS, CHIEF RANGER, MOCA/TUZI, 928-567-3322 x27

Research on Southwestern Cuckoos (aka Roadrunners) Subject of Presentation at Tuzigoot

Clarkdale, AZ: A special slide presentation, “Southwestern Cuckoos: a Study in Contrasts”, will be held Wednesday, May 5, 1 p.m. in the Tuzigoot National Monument Visitor Center, Clarkdale, Az. Susan MacVean, a biologist with Arizona Game and Fish, will describe the natural history and conservation of these animals, members of one of the largest and most diverse families of birds.

MacVean, the non-game biologist for the Flagstaff office of AZ Game and Fish, has worked for over 20 years studying the species and its habitats in northern Arizona. Recently, she has focused on garter snakes and leopard frogs, but is also monitoring peregrines, golden eagles, and conducting marsh and riparian bird surveys.

“Roadrunners have probably inspired more affection and folklore than any other desert dweller,” explained MacVean. “Legends include trapping sleeping rattlesnakes, confounding evil spirits with their footprints, and portending safe journeys”. The researcher will also discuss some of the physical attributes of the roadrunner, “their short wings are only suitable for abbreviated glides, but on the ground they can easily travel at 15 miles per hour, the pace of a 4-minute mile”. Many people, she adds, are interested in the dietary habits of roadrunners, “They are not picky eaters! Roadrunners consume venomous and spiny foods; including insects, spiders, snakes, lizards, bats, rodents, and even birds they can run down or snatch out of the air”.

The elusive Yellow-billed cuckoo, a migratory neotropical visitor to breeding grounds in the Verde Valley, will also be featured in MacVean’s slide show. “The distinctive stuttering call of this bird is heard much more often than the bird is actually seen”, she explained. In central Arizona, the Yellow-billed cuckoo arrives in mid-June through the first of July. “The onset of breeding is apparently correlated with an abundant local food supply. The breeding cycle only takes 17 days from egg-laying to fledging, and nestlings can become fully feathered in two hours”.

The presentation is free with regular admission to Tuzigoot National Monument. The Annual pass, Senior pass, and Access pass are also accepted; children 15 and under are free. For additional information, contact John Reid at Tuzigoot National Monument, 928-634-5564.

--NPS--