

The Signs of November
at the
Community Nature Center
of Prescott



*White-crowned Sparrow - Immature**

1980 Williamson Valley Road
Prescott, AZ

Welcome to the Community Nature Center!

We hope you'll enjoy observing & contemplating the many wonders of this natural area. To help us preserve this special place, **please stay on the trails** and please leave plants *and* animals undisturbed. Remember, footprints made on the fragile grassland & trailside do not heal quickly in our dry environment! **Dogs must be leashed** -- please pick up after your pet. Thank you!

Look for a new **Signs** each month from March-Winter.

HAVE YOU SEEN ...



Silk Tassel **

... **a wide variety of leaf types?** The soft, deciduous leaves have now mostly fallen. However, Alligator Juniper, Pinyon and Ponderosa Pine, Manzanita, Silk Tassel and oaks are among the many plants here that keep their leaves in winter. Pine trees have needles; junipers have scale-like leaves. Leaves of our shrub species are leathery and thick in texture or some have very small leaves.

Our evergreen plants are very resistant to stresses from drought and cold. Thick, waxy leaves retain water; a small-sized leaf, a scale leaf, or a pine needle also reduce the surface area and amount of water that escapes from each leaf. Some evergreens such as pines also have amazing specialized structures within their water transporting system that allows them to continue to move water through the freeze-thaw of winter.

Plants that live in low-nutrient environments often have leaves that stay on the plant longer; however, many deciduous plants naturally live in a more nutrient rich environment. In our dry southwest most of our deciduous species live in wetlands – a more nutrient and water-rich environment. Those big soft leaves that move easily in the wind also help “pump” more water and nutrients through quickly, ensuring rapid growth.



*Red Willow at the pond,
before fall leaf drop*

HAVE YOU SEEN ...



Western Scrub Jay *

... changes in the bird population? Our residents like the scrub jays make a living by eating a varied diet that consists of seeds, fruits, insects, eggs of other birds, or even small mammals. Other residents here include: Spotted and Canyon Towhees, Northern Flicker, White Breasted Nuthatch, Bridled & Plain Titmouse, Bushtits and Ravens.

Winter visitors are passing through, or they may be making a shift in elevation to spend the winter here in a more temperate climate than the one from which they came. These birds include fall warblers, winter robins, white crowned sparrows & dark eyed juncos.

The factors that initiate migratory behavior vary and are not always completely understood. Migration can be triggered by a combination of changes in day length, lower temperatures, changes in food sources and genetics.

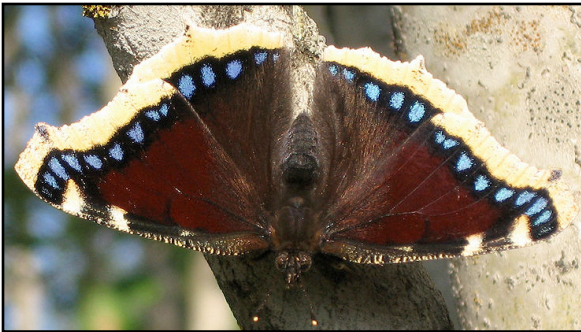
... the distinctive White Crowned Sparrows? These lovely birds are among our most common western migrants. With a song reminiscent of a Meadowlark, these very large sparrows are a welcome addition to the woodland. Easily identified by the size and strong white markings on their head. They breed in Alaska and arctic Canada so those we see in the winter have traveled very long distances. Birds may sing to contest a winter food source. Both males and females sing, although the female song is more varied and is quieter.



White-crowned Sparrow *

HAVE YOU SEEN ...

...that the **Cliff Chipmunk is not as active now?** Cliff chipmunks usually make their dens in rocky areas, or underground burrows and tree nests may be used. They also may have different nesting sites in summer and winter. Although you may glimpse one on a warm day, chipmunks do not store fat and must hibernate. They stash food during warm weather, which they visit during winter months. Cliff chipmunks are fond of our beautiful Alligator Junipers for both food and shelter. In addition to plant matter, cliff chipmunks may eat insects, birds, eggs, reptiles and amphibians.



Mourning Cloak Butterfly

You might see butterflies on a mild winter day. Our lovely Mourning Cloaks are one of the few butterflies that overwinter as adults, but they do hibernate. They may find a tree cavity, or crawl under loose bark. By overwintering, Mourning Cloaks get a head start in the spring over other butterflies. With a life span that may reach a full year, this is one of our longest-lived butterflies.

... insects out and about?

Harvesters and other ants may stir as a sunny day warms their nest, but many insects die, migrate, or overwinter as eggs, larva or pupa.

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For more information on the City of Prescott's Open Space and trails go to <http://cityofprescott.net/services/parks/>

This guide was created in October 2013 by Nichole Trushell for the *Community Nature Center of Prescott*. Photos with permission / photos with * are by Walt Anderson & ** are by Steve Morgan