SPECIES OF THE MONTH

GREAT CRESTED FLYCATCHER
MARCH 2024

Two Great Crested Flycatchers (*Myiarchus crinitus*) were reported in the Phoenix metropolitan area in the fall of 2023. The first was at ponds along Riggs Road in Sun Lakes, a residential area east of Phoenix, 23 to 24 September. The second was reported west of Phoenix at the Tres Rios Wetlands, 28 to 29 October. Only one year earlier, Maricopa County recorded its first record of **Great Crested Flycatcher**. If accepted by the Arizona Bird Committee, the 2023 reports will be the second and third records for the county and the sixth and seventh for Arizona.

24 September 2023, Riggs Road ponds. Photo by Ryan P. O'Donnell

Great Crested Flycatcher is a common breeding species east of the Rocky Mountains, but a rare visitor to Arizona. All Arizona reports but one were in September or October. Visually it is similar to the Brown-crested Flycatcher (*M. tyrannulus*), a common breeding flycatcher in southern Arizona. In fact, the Riggs Road ponds bird was first reported as a Brown-crested Flycatcher and then identified correctly by Ryan P. O'Donnell, an eBird reviewer for Maricopa County. The pale base to the lower mandible on the Great Crested Flycatcher distinguishes it from other *Myiarchus* flycatchers, which have all-dark bills. There is little contrast between cheek and crown on the Great Crested Flycatcher compared to the Brown-crested Flycatcher, which has a pale face with a darker crown. The yellow on the belly of Great Crested Flycatcher is brighter and extends farther up the breast than other *Myiarchus* flycatchers. The undertail feathers are extensively rufous compared to those of Brown-crested Flycatcher, which are darker on the inside of the feather shaft and those of Ash-throated Flycatcher (*M. cinerascens*), which has dark tips to the rusty tail feathers. The bill of the Great Crested Flycatcher is intermediate between that of the Ash-throated and the western subspecies of Brown-crested Flycatcher (*M. c. magister*) found in Arizona.