

A close look at a great shot posted on our website by a reader like you



FAIRY DUST: Verdin (*Auriparus flaviceps*) on Baja fairy duster (*Calliandra californica*), Tucson, Arizona, September 2, 2009, 7:11 am, by Joan Gellatly

Several Verdins nest in Joan Gellatly's neighborhood along the mostly dry Rillito River in Tucson, Arizona. The bird above is a juvenile from this year's brood. It ventured into Joan's backyard one September morning as she sat 15-20 feet away in a lawn chair, sun behind her, camera in hand at ready position.

We're glad that it did, because we don't often get to see Verdins so young. The bird is just starting to gain its characteristic yellow head feathers. Notice also some downy feathers still in place on the bird's breast. Another clue to the bird's tender age is the pinkish yellow at the base of its bill. As Verdins mature, their bills turn completely dark gray or black.

Two years ago, Gellatly took a basic birding class in which she learned that the Baja fairy duster the bird is perched on is great for attracting hummingbirds and butterflies. She has since learned that Verdins like the shrub, too!

Camera: Canon EOS 40D, handheld

Lens: 300mm f/4L image stabilized prime lens and a 1.4x teleconverter, focal length 420mm

Settings: ISO 500, 1/500, f/8, shutter priority mode, one-shot focus setting

Light: Cloudy, early morning, no flash

Format: RAW converted to JPEG

Adjustments: Cropped 40%. Minor adjustment on levels, color, and sharpness, Photoshop Elements 7 used for processing



PATIENT BIRDER: *Birder's World* subscriber Joan Gellatly looks for raptors in the Sulphur Springs Valley, in southeastern Arizona. Joan's passion for birding and bird photography developed quickly since moving to Tucson from the Midwest two years ago. An active contributor to our online galleries, she has had two of her bird shots selected as Photo of the Week. Joan says she's semi-retired from a career in marketing administration. She currently does free-lance recording work.

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