



Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

Fall 2012

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President's Report

By Ron Serviss

We have tried to keep you abreast of the significant changes FSPR has gone through over the past several months. This included the development of our first-ever Five-Year Strategic Plan last year. During the development of the plan, two major strategies were considered by the Board of Directors. One path was to maintain the status quo — to simply keep doing what we have done successfully for the past 20 years. We would continue providing our nature and history docent-led walks and operating our two museum/bookstores.

The major argument against this strategy was that because we know the San Pedro River is in trouble, FSPR should be doing more to educate the public on the issues. We also need to be monitoring and lobbying our local, state, and national leaders. As I stated at one of our planning meetings, "I didn't want to be leading walks to see the last cottonwood on the River."

In the end, we chose the second option, which continues all those things our wonderful volunteers accomplish, but also adds the advocacy component. In selecting this direction, we realized it was not something that we could do well strictly via volunteers, but would need to hire a full-time Executive Director.

We have been very fortunate to receive the support of the Conservation Lands Foundation through all this. That group provided seed

money to help us with planning and to hire our Executive Director. However, CLF has made it clear that FSPR needs to demonstrate that we are working toward being self-sustaining, that we can support our salary commitments over the long haul.

We have been very successful over the past several years in securing grants from several different sources. While we very much appreciate these grants, they are always tied to accomplishing specific tasks, such as producing videos or purchasing computers. It is rare to find a grant that can be used for everyday operating expenses. For this reason, we have turned to our membership to ask for donations that can be used to pay our Executive Director's salary, and, in turn, accomplish activities that will support the continued health of the San Pedro River environment.

Last summer, you received our first request for donations; shortly, you will receive our end-of-year appeal. This is the same formula used by most environmental organizations. I realize that FSPR members, being people who care about issues facing our planet, receive a great number of these appeals at this time of year. I'm asking you to give FSPR fair consideration as you decide how much and to whom to give your donations. I'm hoping the phrase "Think global, act local" will influence your decision.

Thank you again for all you have done for the River this past year. I hope you and all those dear to you have a wonderful holiday.



2012 Annual Meeting attendees. Photo by Robert Weissler.

2012 Annual Meeting

By Ron Serviss

On November 3, about 40 members of FSPR met on a beautiful fall afternoon for lots of good food and conversation at our Annual Meeting and Volunteer Appreciation event. We gathered at the ramada behind the San Pedro House to catch up on what our Friends group has been doing for the past 12 months and to share what is planned for the coming year. As president, I reviewed the many accomplishments of the past year and thanked the volunteers for their contributions to the organization. Outgoing Board members Chris Long, Dutch Nagle, and John Rose were thanked for their years of service and new Board members Ron Stewart and Tom Wood were welcomed. Tom Clancy spoke of the need for more nature docents, while Ron Stewart relayed his efforts to expand the cultural program for the coming year. The latter will include more member-only walks and educational talks. But as is the case every year, the highlight of the day was the wonderful potluck dishes prepared by the attendees.

Executive Director's Report

By Robert Weissler

As we embark on the FSPR year-end donor appeal that you soon will receive in your mailbox, we can reflect on a successful summer fundraising appeal in which we received 32 responses totaling nearly \$2000.

The film festival has been postponed until February due to problems with the original venue that made it unsuitable to hold the event. CLF provided an additional \$2000 to support a children's program scheduled in the afternoon prior to the evening program for adults, so we are focused on securing a new venue to schedule a firm date for the film festival.

At the recent USPP PAC (Upper San Pedro Partnership Advisory Committee) meeting, the PAC received a presentation from Brooke Bushman of The Nature Conservancy on high-priority projects recommended by the USPP

Technical Committee, including the prospective Palominas and proposed Riverstone infiltration projects. At this early stage, the focus is on funding scoping and assessment studies to develop detailed project implementation plans. Getting priority projects into the pipeline certainly is the first step as funding becomes available. On Nov. 14, PAC members received a tour of water conservation projects, including stormwater management on the Fort Huachuca commissary parking lot and a new treatment process implemented at the Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park (EOP).

Our efforts to secure additional grants continue with United Way and other funding sources. Meanwhile, we are executing on grants from CLF and BLM for capacity-building activities for our staff and Board of Directors, such as QuickBooks training sessions. FSPR will hire an accounting firm to assist in filing the Form 990 tax return. Meanwhile, our bookkeeper Pam Collins will help FSPR to submit forms for the

Indirect Cost Rate Proposal to the Department of Interior (DOI) National Business Center. This DOI Certification will establish the admin fee percentage that we can charge the federal government when applying for BLM grant funding. Furthermore, grants from Cochise Community Foundation (CCF), Walton Family Foundation (WFF), and BLM support educational videos for youth, as well as advocacy for the river. Check out our recently completed advocacy video, "[Our River: A Work in Progress.](#)" Visit the [home page of the FSPR website](#) for other recent video links!

In late October, end of fiscal year volunteer records were compiled and totaled (see article, page 8). There were nearly 10,000 volunteer hours in FY 2012, which is the equivalent of over \$200K in labor. Final reports for several grants were submitted. The narrative and financial reports for the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF) Constituency Development Program (CDP) 2011 Final Report were submitted. In addition, the 2011 Cochise Community Foundation (CCF) grant that funded part of the hydrology and river advocacy videos concluded and a final report was submitted. I met with CCF grant administrator Tresa Thomas-Massiongale and Sierra Vista City Councilwoman Gwen Calhoun to discuss partnerships for tourism that tie in many different local resources such as SPRNCA. Further discussion will center on funding the less "glamorous" aspects of non-profits — infrastructure, operations, and salaried staff — that comes under the banner of indirect costs. Meanwhile, CLF added an Arizona Friends Network page to the CLF Partners Resource Library to facilitate more frequent exchanges among Friends groups.

Besides the gathering of Friends groups at the recent CLF Rendezvous (see article, page 9), southern Arizona Friends groups — including Friends of Ironwood Forest, Empire Ranch Foundation, Cienega Watershed Partnership, and FSPR — met with BLM staff at the Tucson Field Office for information sharing and collaborative engagement. Among the agenda items were a variety of strategies tied to the BLM 15-year strategic plan, including the national partnership strategy and collaboration strategy with Resource Advisory Council (RAC), the 3-year state BLM work plan, and land use plans (aka Resource Management Plans or RMPs) for specific sites like the Las Cienegas National



Conservation Area (NCA), the upcoming revision of the Ironwood Forest NCA RMP, and the initial scoping of San Pedro Riparian NCA RMP, in which FSPR plans to engage and help shape. Also of considerable interest was the current BLM position and roles on the Rosemont Mine approval process managed by the US Forest Service and protecting the watershed including Las Cienegas NCA. Liability insurance issues and the need for annual filing of Volunteer Service Agreement forms by individual volunteers were of particular interest to FSPR — *especially now that the lawsuit has been dismissed!* We are now focused on the way forward, which appears to require each Friends organization to maintain its own liability policy.

FSPR supported the Buena High School Nature Club visit to Biosphere2 on October 25 using funding for youth from the BLM Hands On The Land grant. In November, Maura O'Brien, an Americorps intern with The Nature Conservancy, spoke to the club about how to get into a career involving conservation of public lands. In December, the guest speaker will be Luke Reese of The Nature Conservancy.

After more than 10 years serving as FSPR office manager, Kathryn Ojerio has resigned to take a job at Fort Huachuca. We wish her the best in her new position and offer our appreciation for her work for the Friends over the years.

Finally, Cochise College screened *Green Fire*, a full-length feature film about the life of Aldo Leopold, one of America's pre-eminent conservationists. The film included interviews with Bill McDonald, head of the Malpai Borderlands Group, a collection of conservation-minded ranchers who operate enormous spreads in the southeastern corner of Arizona and the southwestern corner of New Mexico. This group could serve as an example of the kind of landowner-stewarded public/private lands group that is the focus of the lower San Pedro River initiative of the US Fish and Wildlife Service. I highly recommend the film to our entire membership whenever it becomes widely available.



SCA Becky, Ranger Bob, and volunteers Eva, Bonnie, Pete, Mel, and Wayne pose behind half the trash collected on November 17. Photo by Ron Serviss.

Two Fall Clean-ups

By Ron Serviss

FSPR participated in 2 work parties this fall. The first was to assist Ranger Bob with trail work at the Fairbank town site. A group of six FSPR volunteers and a contingent of Fort Huachuca soldiers gathered on September 15 to clear brush and tree limbs from the river loop trail leading north from the School House to the Central Mill site. Because this is a popular site for equestrians, it was important to trim back higher mesquite branches that might snag a rider. Repairs were also made to eroded trails. Kudos to Jane Knoche, who assisted the site hosts with mowing around the town site.

On November 17, the group (minus the soldiers) reassembled at the Hereford Bridge Trailhead to pick up trash and remove old tires along about 1.5 miles of the river, south of the Bridge. It never fails to amaze just how much trash accumulates, particularly after the monsoons. The photo shows less than half of what was collected by our small but determined group.

Such work is not for everyone, as it is physical and dirty. We have taken steps to make it less demanding than previous efforts, such as shortening the length of clean-up and working back towards our vehicles so people can leave at any time. If you would like to be on the notification list for clean-ups, contact me at serviss.ron@gmail.com. We hope to do our next clean-up in January, weather permitting.

Ramsey Christmas Bird Count Dec. 22

By Robert Weissler & Ted Mouras

This year's Ramsey Canyon Christmas Bird Count (RCCBC) will be held on Saturday, December 22. There are 14 count (team) areas within the circle, including areas of riparian gallery forest along the San Pedro River, mesquite/semi-arid grassland, Chihuahuan desert scrub, oak savannah, oak woodland, mountain riparian woodland, and montane forest. Counters also visit the EOP and suburban areas of Sierra Vista, so there is something for everyone. As always, feeder watchers make an important contribution to our count.

Please visit the Huachuca Audubon web page for the RCCBC at <http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/CBC/RCCBC.php>. Click on the CBC link to see a map of the count circle and check out other information. This is also where you can download the admin form, a revised summary checklist, and a brand-new field check list, the latter two courtesy of Erika Wilson.

We will meet for breakfast at 6:30 am at the Lone Star Cafe located at the intersection of Highway 92 and Hereford Road. During breakfast, participants will receive checklists, maps, and other information. **We will also collect a \$5 fee for each person having breakfast** (there is no longer a \$5 CBC field participant fee). *PLEASE BRING \$5 IN CASH* for breakfast. Since we need a rough idea of how many folks will be joining us for breakfast, *contact us by phone or e-mail if you plan to attend the breakfast.*

The compilation dinner will be held at the Country House that evening. See the website for details, including maps.

If you would like to participate, but have not informed us, contact Ted Mouras at tedmouras@mindspring.com (phone 803-0221) or Robert Weissler at weissler@aves.org (phone 803-0794). We look forward to a satisfying day of counting birds in the field or at home!



Appleton-Whittell Count January 5

By Robert Weissler

The 7th annual Appleton-Whittell Christmas Bird Count will take place on Saturday, January 5. The count circle is centered near the Audubon Appleton-Whittell Research Ranch south of Elgin in the Sonoita Valley and includes the northwest portion of Fort Huachuca, the Babocomari Ranch, Canelo, the Mustang Mountains, and Elgin. Last year, 94 species and 3,850 individual birds were recorded by 21 participants during the count. I will be working with Linda Kennedy (lkennedy@audubon.org) of the Research Ranch to coordinate the parties that head into the field. **Note: There is no longer a \$5 CBC field participant fee!**

Please go to the Huachuca Audubon website for the AWCBC at <http://www.huachuca-audubon.org/CBC/AWCBC.php> to view the field card, maps, and party hours/miles and rare bird forms, plus a zoomable Google map of the count circle. The field card can be printed and used to record the tally of birds seen. It lists typical winter birds, most of which have been recorded during prior counts.

If you have not already contacted me, please let me know (preferably via e-mail at weissler@aves.org; phone 803-0794) if you will be able to participate in the upcoming count, and, if relevant, who will be joining you and what area(s) you are interested in covering.

Friends Celebrate Fall with Annual Holiday Sale

With the changing colors of the cottonwood trees and the arrival of the wintering birds, FSPR announces its annual holiday sale going on now at the San Pedro House bookstore and the Fairbank Schoolhouse.

San Pedro House, at 9800 E. Highway 90 on the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, features a large selection of birding and nature-related books, field guides, children's stories, regional history, Southwest cooking, landscaping, and more for all the nature enthusiasts on your list. The bookstore is open every day (except Christmas) 9:30 am to 4:30 pm and is staffed almost entirely by volunteers.

The Fairbank Schoolhouse is located on Highway 82 just east of the river, 8 miles west of Tombstone. The schoolhouse — open to the public Friday, Saturday, and Sunday — offers a free museum with a replica schoolroom, local history displays, and small gift shop.

The two shops are offering the general public 10% off on all purchases through December 24. Proceeds are used to maintain and improve the riparian area for public enjoyment and help support FSPR programs. Shop locally with nature in mind!

Fall on the San Pedro. Photo by Bob Herrmann.



Final Report on San Pedro Functioning Presented

By Sue Leskiw

FSPR members were well represented at a December 5 public meeting in Sierra Vista, where the National Riparian Service Team (NRST) presented its assessment report on functioning of the San Pedro River. Also among the 40 attendees were representatives from BLM, Fort Huachuca, Arizona State Parks, the Sierra Vista Environmental Affairs Commission and mayor, Congressman Barber's office, Huachuca Audubon, and those who identified with no group other than "concerned citizens."

NRST members Mike Lunn and Janice Staats discussed findings of two reports (totaling 331 pages; see article, page 9, for link) on riparian conditions along the San Pedro. The assessment project, which began in March 2011, included 10 days spent in April 2012 walking most of the river's 51 miles in order to describe its 10 reaches. (FSPR president Ron Serviss accompanied the team for 7-8 days.) The reaches, which ranged from 1 to 9 miles long, started at the Mexican border, and for the most part, changed from perennial flows (gaining reaches) to transitional to intermittent flows (losing reaches) as the river moved northward.

The NRST used a Proper Functioning Condition (PFC) assessment method, which evaluates physical functionality based on hydrology, vegetation, and erosion/deposition attributes and processes. The assessment provides a description of the current riparian condition — a snapshot in time — of individual reaches of the San Pedro, compared to their potential, or "the highest ecological status that could be attained in the current climate, given no political, social or economic constraints."

The results divided the river into three categories: 1) PFC, where adequate vegetation, landforms, and large woody debris are present to make riparian areas resilient to the most common flood events; 2) functional at risk (FAR), which is susceptible to impairment during moderately high floods; and 3) nonfunctional, which is the condition the river was in when SPRNCA was designated in 1987. By answering 17 questions about hydrology, vegetation, and erosion/deposition for each reach, the team judged 54% (27.4 miles) of the

river to be PFC, with the remainder (23.4 miles) being FAR (with 8.9 miles on an upward trend, 4.2 miles on a downward trend, and 10.3 miles having no apparent trend). Thus, 72% of the San Pedro within SPRNCA is currently either properly functioning or in an upward trend (moving toward PFC).

The NRST was unable to detect patterns of decline in vegetative health that established a clear causal link to groundwater reduction. Instead of visible rapid decline (e.g., many trees dying), the team found subtle changes such as leafless tops of trees that could be due to disease, insects, weather, or stressors other than lowering of the water table.

During the question-and-answer period, some members of the audience spoke to the "superficial" nature of the observations and expressed concern that the take-home message left out the overarching risk to the river's future from groundwater depletion. Dr. Gary Noonan called the report's conclusions "superficial observations based on what can be seen from the surface." He stated that the groundwater problem "should be the take-home message... The average person, reading from an official government document that over half the river is designated as PFC, would think everything is okay." He likened the river's situation to a heart attack, in that reductions in groundwater are like arteries being constricted unseen below the surface. Finally, a point is reached where the river/body cannot recover. "We don't want the San Pedro to become a barren ditch like river(s) that used to flow through Tucson."

Dutch Nagel said he was disturbed that the report was "too rosy" in that it sends out a message that the river is improving. An NRST member responded that the San Pedro is in much better shape than its "before" pictures from 1987. "It's a very young river that has had only 30 years to recover from overgrazing. The river is save-able, it still has all the parts needed to function, it has not gone over the edge, and won't fall apart tomorrow. We're not seeing lines of dying trees. But the future will be determined through our actions."

An audience member opined that "it's all conjecture that groundwater is being depleted." Since BLM can't make public data from its monitoring wells along the river because of its water rights litigation, it's "crackpots

who are insisting that a cone of depression exists. Sandy Kunzer replied that there are quantitative measurements showing that such a cone is moving toward the river. A member of the Sierra Vista Environmental Affairs Committee chimed in that some believe that the 5100 acre-foot groundwater pumping deficit calculated for 2011 is vastly overstated and went on to express frustration that some people are trying to stop the Tribute Project in Sierra Vista (see Spring 2012 River Roundup, page 6), which he termed “the best-planned and water-conscious development we could have.”

Another attendee stated that more water recycling is needed, ranchers should be told that “we mean it” re: trespassing cows grazing in SPRNCA, and that St David “should not have the right to ruin the river for the rest of us.”

Shar Porier, a reporter from the Sierra Vista Herald (article at <http://www.svherald.com/content/news/2012/12/07/343105>), advised attendees to “get beyond your little individual groups and speak to the general public at large” about the countywide issue of water supply.

It was acknowledged that BLM wrestled with how to present the data, knowing that there is a problem with cumulative groundwater depletion. If one reads beyond the “72% of the San Pedro is in PFC or improving” statements, there are plenty of warnings in the report about what could happen if no action is taken. For example, “If, or once, groundwater recharge to the San Pedro River is lost, the impacts will likely be irreversible”... “Groundwater pumping deficit issue must be addressed now while the river still has the ability to take advantage of the water it receives from both surface and groundwater flows for system recovery, or the positive effects of BLM’s management will be negated”... “It is widely recognized that one possible future outcome is that the river will dry up if the community and State fail to act to maintain the groundwater supply to the river over time; however, it is also possible that actions will be taken that keep the river flowing and healthy as Congress intended in the designation of the SPRNCA. Although the PFC assessment does not speak to the groundwater issue, it does provide pertinent information to the BLM and public about management and monitoring needs that will be important in the upcoming revision of the SPRNCA management plan.”



Murray Springs ramada. Photo by Dwight Long.

Murray Springs Clovis Site Designated National Historic Landmark

By Robert Weissler

Through the efforts of the BLM, Murray Springs has received recognition as a National Historic Landmark. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the designation on October 17. This site located in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area has evidence of inhabitants associated with the Clovis Culture, named for the Clovis Point projectile originally discovered near Clovis, New Mexico. This culture dates back as far as 13,000 years and represents the first known inhabitants in the upper San Pedro Valley. Clovis people used these weapons and other stone tools to hunt and kill mammoths, bison, and other large prey of the late Pleistocene. In 1966 Dr. C. Vance Haynes and Dr. Peter Mehringer of the University of Arizona first discovered Murray Springs. Haynes excavated the site from 1967-71. Murray Springs has since been recognized as the most-extensive sample of Clovis flint knapping activity known in the western United States.

SPRNCA was created by an act of Congress in 1988 to protect the natural and cultural resources and historic sites in or near the San Pedro River, including Murray Springs. SPRNCA is a jewel in our National Conservation Lands, the system of federal lands managed by the BLM.

Federal management of these public lands is vital to their continued preservation. State land exchanges have also been helpful in augmenting our protected areas as well providing buffers for Fort Huachuca.

Thanks to All Our Volunteers!

The end of the fiscal year is when FSPR tallies up the hours that volunteers have dedicated to the organization, whether staffing at SPH or Fairbank, leading walks, or on special events. Below is a list of those who have given their time and expertise during the last year. Special recognition goes to Mike Foster, who spent over 1200 hours volunteering for FSPR!

500+ Hours

Mike Foster (1249), Dutch Nagle (688.5), Ron Serviss (657), Sally Rosén (599), Ann Hartfiel (512.25)

200-499 Hours

Renell Stewart (449), Chris Long (443), Mary Bonds (439), John Broz (274), James Peterson (229), Jane Chambers (225.5), Dave Heck (204)

100-199 Hours

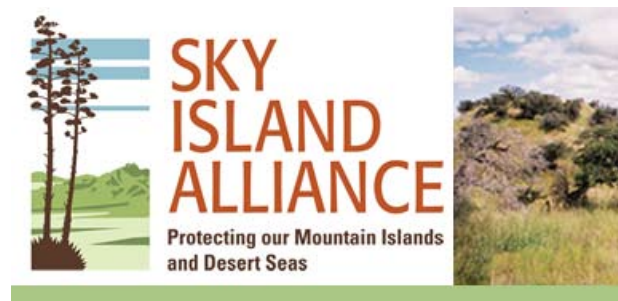
Kathy Holland (187), Gary Noonan (184), Sandy Kunzer (177), Tom Clancy (175.5), Virginia Bealer (155), Ron Stewart (154.25), Bonnie Bosworth (149), Ted Mouras (149.5), Jeanie Bragg (148.5), Joan Spiczka (118.5), Bette Ford (114.75), Gabrielle LaFargue (113.5), Betty Goble (108.5), Jack Whetstone (108), Michael White (105.75), Regina Rutledge (105)

50-99 Hours

Erika Wilson (94.5), Francie Hills (87), Mary Beth Sutor (82.25), Rick Thompson (81), Tess Jurek (74), Terry McCabe (73), Catherine Newell (71), Lori Kovash (69), Rowena Bradshaw (68), Earl Bradshaw (68), Nancy McCarrell (63), Sue Leskiw (61.5), Julie Bradley (61), Kathleen Oliver (61), Robert Weissler (56.5), Nancy Docherty (55.5), Kathleen Smith/Oliver (53)

1-49 Hours

John Rose (35.5), Eva Nagy (33), Laura Mackin (24.5), DeForest Lewis (24), Paul Catullo (21.2), Merce Dostale (20), Michael Tarachow (20), Edna Weigel (20), Pete Sockness (19), Bob Herrmann (16), Dwight Long (15.5), Mike Rosen (13.75), Perrie Barnes (13.5), Dieter Kamm (13.5), Elaine Emeigh (12), John Porter (12), Susan Glandon (11.5), Tricia Gerrodette (10.5), Priscilla Brodtkin (10), Cado Daly (10), Tom Wood (10), Betty Moldanado (9), Rick Romea (9), Bob Jones (8), Norma Jones (8), Ted White (7), Richard Bauer (6.5), Eric Andersen (6), Leah Frankel (6), Ceci Lewis (6), Gary Spivey (5.5), Ty Holland (5), Stewart Healy (4.5), Ann Lee (4.5)



Tracking on the San Pedro

By Ron Serviss

Sky Island Alliance (SIA) is a well-respected environmental organization based in Tucson. They do, among many things, a great deal of citizen science in the sky islands of Arizona, New Mexico, and Sonora, Mexico. One of its programs is to document important corridors used by wildlife. SIA does this by identifying critical habitat and potential corridors that might link them. It then monitors these corridors every 6 weeks using teams of well-trained volunteers. The focus is on identifying tracks and/or signs of specific indicator species, such as bear, mountain lion, and bobcat. These data are critical for identifying areas where special mitigation efforts should be implemented in order to lessen the impact of human-wildlife conflicts. Some of these mitigations are inclusion of tunnels or overpasses to allow safe passage of wildlife through expanded freeways or outright protection of critical wildlife corridors. SIA data have been used by various governmental planning agencies, including the Arizona Department of Transportation.

I'm telling you about this because SIA is in the discussion stage with BLM to identify one or more corridors within SPRNCA for monitoring. Once needed agreements are in place and corridor(s) identified, SIA will conduct a 4-day training program for interest volunteers. Currently, the target date is April 2013.

I can tell you from past experience that this is a very rewarding program. Participating will really deepen your appreciation for the nature in our backyard. We have documented an ocelot in the Huachucas and a jaguar in the Whetstones. Can you imagine the excitement if your team is the first to document their entry into SPRNCA? I will let you know more information as it becomes available.

New BLM Analyses of San Pedro & Other SPRNCA Information

By Gerald R. Noonan, PhD

In November 2012, BLM distributed CDs with two reports about the San Pedro River (see below). The first is an updated version of a file released earlier. It provides interesting information about conditions along the River. The second document assesses the potential natural communities and factors limiting their occurrence along the River. This document formed the basis of a presentation given in Sierra Vista on December 5 (see article, page 6). Copies of both of the files can be downloaded from: <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/Revising%20BLM%20Resource%20Management%20Plan%20for%20SPRNCA.html>.

New BLM Documents

Fogg, J., Elmore, W. and Gonzalez, M. 2012. Riparian Conditions Along The San Pedro River: Potential Natural Communities And Factors Limiting Their Occurrence. Bureau of Land Management. The National Riparian Service Team, Prineville, Oregon. 33 p. [update of an earlier document to list authors & provide information about why the document was generated]. (PDF at <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/Revising%20BLM%20Resource%20Management%20Plan%20for%20SPRNCA.html>).

NRST. 2012. Riparian Conditions Along The San Pedro River. Proper Functioning Condition Riparian Assessment Report. Bureau of Land Management. The National Riparian Service Team, November 2012, Prineville, Oregon. 298 p. (PDF at <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/Revising%20BLM%20Resource%20Management%20Plan%20for%20SPRNCA.html>).

Other Documents about SPRNCA

The ScienceQuest website that hosts these BLM files contains other sources of information. The site is independent of FSPR, and mention of it does not imply FSPR sponsorship or endorsement. Science articles about the River, the natural history of riparian animals and plants, and historical journals written by early travelers through southeastern Arizona are available on pages that branch from <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/index.html>.

Topics include History of the Friends of the San Pedro River; Insects and Other Arthropods of SPRNCA; Myth Busting Along the Upper San Pedro River; Massive Habitat Changes Along the Upper San Pedro River and Other Southwestern Waterways; The Overgrazing of Arizona Rangelands; Fuelwood Cutting in the San Pedro River Valley; Previous Farming by the San Pedro House; FSPR's Restoration of the San Pedro House; and accounts of early travelers through southern Arizona.

In December, I will be adding articles about birds commonly seen at or near San Pedro House. The documents will provide tips on identifying these species and summarize their natural history. Early next year, a bibliography listing hundreds of scientific papers about the San Pedro River area will be added to the site.

October CLF Rendezvous

By Robert Weissler

The first weekend in October, FSPR was well represented by four "friends" at the Conservation Lands Foundation (CLF) Rendezvous in Grand Junction, CO. Friends groups from across the country met to share experiences, make new contacts, and learn fundraising and advocacy skills, in order to tell the story of our local National Conservation Areas (NCA) and Monuments in the context of the *National Conservations Lands*.

Arizona and New Mexico Friends groups met in a smaller forum to discuss common issues such as target shooting, motorized vehicles, and border-related concerns. BLM shared its national 15-year strategic plan. CLF emphasized the importance of engaging at the state level to shape the strategic plan for Arizona (not to mention involvement in the RMP process).

The paleontology field trip was quite interesting, with many "Jurassic Park" photo ops at the museum in nearby Fruita. Break-out sessions were held on topics such as how to engage local communities to become involved in public land concerns and how to tell the story of a local NCA or Monument when engaging in advocacy with the public or in fundraising.





Donna and Til on her 60th birthday.

Fairbank Hosts Move on

After a year and a half, site hosts Donna and Til Forrer are leaving Fairbank for 10 acres near Tombstone. The two wrote a letter to Sally Rosen, to share with all the volunteers with whom they interfaced during their time there.

Greetings,

Just wanted to send out a big “thank you” to those of you who have made our stay at Fairbank simply wonderful. Enjoying this piece of heaven on earth has been a privilege, and meeting the fine folks who keep it alive has been heartwarming. The volunteers are (without exception) a giving group of folks.

We would have missed so much, had we not given of ourselves as well. Visitors made sure that we knew how much they appreciated the little things we did over and above our basic chores. Questions about living “among the dead” gave us smiles (of course, there was the time the gate closed itself) and chuckles. Watching as so many took advantage of our backyard environment gave us pleasure that only those able to be touched by nature understand.

Since we knew our stay was limited, we were motivated to enjoy every moment. Needless to say, it’s not easy to leave all this behind. But on the other hand, knowing the next hosts will make similar memories makes things easier.

May God continue to bless your efforts as you endeavor to preserve the San Pedro area.

— **Til and Donna Forrer**



Female Red-winged Blackbirds at San Pedro House. Photo by Gary Noonan.

They Flock to the San Pedro House

By Gerald R. Noonan, Ph. D.

Wintertime visitors to the San Pedro House often ask FSPR volunteers for information about the large flocks of female Red-winged Blackbirds. The flocks of these birds are conspicuous as they energetically fly around SPH and land in great numbers on bird feeders or on the ground near the feeders.

People sometimes mistake female blackbirds for sparrows, but the former are larger (approximately 8.8 inches long) from tip of bill to the tip of tail). Our most common sparrows are generally between 5.5 and 7 inches in length. Female Red-winged Blackbirds have a relatively thinner bill than sparrows, dark brown body above that is tinged with black and gray with a rufous color along the edges of the feathers, a light or pale yellow line extending backwards from the eye, and uniform blackish-brown streaks on their pale underparts.

Male Red-winged Blackbirds sometimes show up individually near SPH. They have a blackish body. When the wings are at rest, a red shoulder with a pale yellow border is often visible. Sometimes, only the pale yellow border and a



Female Red-winged Blackbird. Photo by Gary Noonan.



Male Red-winged Blackbird. Photo by Gary Noonan.

little bit or none of the red patch can be seen, as illustrated by the photo.

Red-winged Blackbirds breed from central Alaska and Canada south to Baja California, Central America, and the West Indies. They overwinter throughout much of their southern breeding range as far north as southern British Columbia, Colorado, the southern portion of the Great Lakes, and coastal New England. Breeding most often occurs in freshwater marshes, but also in brushy swamps and hayfields. The birds often forage together in open habitats like fields and mudflats. Once the breeding season is over, they often gather in large flocks in open habitats such as farm fields, pastures, and feedlots.

The adults feed primarily on insects and seeds. During the summer, they eat small invertebrates — such as beetles, caterpillars, and grasshoppers — and may feed on spiders, millipedes, and snails. About 75% of the adults' annual diet is seeds of grasses, weeds, and waste grain. The birds sometimes eat berries and small fruits. They forage mostly by walking on the ground, but sometimes may seek food in shrubs and trees. After the breeding season, Red-winged Blackbirds usually forage in flocks and may be associated with other blackbirds and starlings.

Males defend their territory and attract mates by singing while perched on a high stalk with feathers fluffed out, tail partly spread, and the leading edges of the wings lifted to prominently display the red shoulder patches. They also sing while doing a slow, fluttering flight. A male often has more than one mate. The adults can be very aggressive in nesting territory and often attack larger birds that approach and loudly protest

human intruders. The female builds the nest in marsh plants such as cattails or bulrushes, in bushes or saplings close to water, or in dense grasses in fields. The nest is a bulky, open cup lashed to surrounding vegetation and consisting of grasses, reeds, leaves, and other plant material. It is lined with fine grass. The female usually lays 3-4 eggs, less often, 2-6. The eggs are pale blue-green and have markings of black, brown, and purple concentrated at the larger end. The female incubates the eggs for about 10-13 days. Both parents feed the nestlings, with the female doing more than the male. The young leave the nest about 11-14 days after hatching.



Nest and eggs (Wisconsin). Photo by Gary Noonan.

References

- Farrand, J., Jr. (ed.). 1989. The Audubon Society Master Guide to Birding 3. Warblers to Sparrows. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Borzoi Book. 399 p.
- Kaufman, K. 1996. Lives of North American Birds. Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston. xxv+675 p.
- Sibley, D. A. 2003. The Sibley Field Guide to Birds of Western North America. National Audubon Society. Alfred A. Knopf, New York. Chanticleer Press, Inc. 471 p.

Fate of Arizona Propositions

On November 6, there was good news for conservation-minded Arizonans, as voters approved Prop 119 and rejected Prop 120. Prop 119 will facilitate land exchanges involving state trust and federal lands for creating buffers around military installations and add public lands with valuable natural resources to our National Conservation Lands. Prop 120 (asserting state sovereignty over federal lands) was soundly defeated. This reflects concern about the idea of state management of all public lands, including cherished federal icons like Grand Canyon National Park. The prospect of an extremely limited state budget to keep even state parks open and the lack of staff for managing these lands were overwhelming reasons to reject the measure.

Events Calendar, December-March

[SPH = San Pedro House; FSH = Fairbank School House; HAS = Huachuca Audubon Society; SABO = Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory]

SPH Open as Visitor Center (Daily), 9:30 AM-4:30 PM

FSH Open as a Visitor Center (Friday-Sunday), 9:30 AM-4:30 PM

Understanding the River Interpretive Walks

Every Saturday at SPH

☛ 9 AM — December 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

☛ 9 AM — January 5, 12, 19, 26

☛ 9 AM — February 2, 9, 16, 23

☛ 9 AM — March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

FSPR Bird Walks

Second Wednesday & Fourth Saturday at SPH

☛ 8AM — Dec 12 (Wed); Dec 22 (Sat)

☛ 8 AM — Jan 9 (Wed); Jan 26 (Sat)

☛ 8 AM — Feb 13 (Wed); Feb 23 (Sat)

☛ 8 AM — March 13 (Wed); March 23 (Sat)

FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park (EOP)

☛ 8 AM — December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

☛ 8 AM — January 6, 13, 20, 27

☛ 8 AM — February 3, 10, 17, 24

☛ 8 AM — March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

Special Events

☛ Dec 8 (Sat), 8 AM — Members-only Walk to Contention City

☛ Jan 19 (Sat), 9 AM — Fairbank History Walk

☛ Jan 27 (Sun), 9 AM — Members-only walk to Charleston

☛ Feb 16 (Sat), 9 AM — Millville History Walk

☛ March 2 (Sat), 9 AM — Fairbank Day and Fairbank to Terrenate Hike

☛ March 9 (Sat), 9 AM — Murray Springs History Walk

☛ March 16 (Sat), 9 AM — Terrenate History Walk as part of AZ Heritage & Archaeology Month

New & Renewing Members, September-November

Vincent & Rose Abrahamson, Bettina & Robert Arrigoni, Jini Bausch, John Black, Susan Bortman, Christi & Ken Charters, Nancy Docherty, Elaine & Melvin Emeigh, Roger Funk & Douglas Noffsinger, Bret Galloway, Alice Garrett, Ryoko Gill, Ken Gray, Mark Hansen, Marilyn Henley, Francie Hills, Martha Irvine, Alice Klarke, Dave & Julie Kubitsky, Skip Miller, Ingrid Minor & Sandra Mosely, Alice Moffitt, Sandy Moore, Miriam & Michael Moss, Stephen Ogle, Elizabeth Quinlan, Mary Raje, Holly Richter, Heidi Schubert, Ron Serviss & Eva Nagy, Robert & Liza Weissler, Robert White

FSPR has installed free doggy-doo bag dispensers and collection baskets at SPH. One is at the central entrance and the other is next to the restroom entrance. We are pleased to see that people are using the bags and the trails are a little cleaner.

Contact List

- President — Ron Serviss
- Directors — Tom Clancy, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart, Ron Stewart, Tom Wood
- Treasurer — Renell Stewart
- Docent Activities — Tom Clancy, Ron Stewart
- Education Program — John Rose
- Education Committee — Sandy Kunzer
- Membership — Bonnie Bosworth
- Newsletter Editor — Sue Leskiw
- Executive Director — Robert Weissler
- Bookstore Manager — Laura Mackin
- Bookkeeper — Pam Collins

To contact any of the above individuals, please call the office at 520-459-2555 or send us e-mail at fspr@sanpedroriver.org or

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Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR) is a nonprofit, volunteer organization dedicated to the conservation of the River and the health of its ecosystems through advocacy, educational programs, and interpretive events.