

Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

May 2011

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President's Report

By Ron Serviss

This is traditionally the busiest time of the year for the Friends, and 2011 has been no exception. Our volunteers have been working very hard to expand and improve our educational activities and to strengthen the organization. Here is a brief accounting of some of those activities.

In the last newsletter, I noted that we had received a \$10,000 grant from the Conservation Lands Foundation to develop a strategic plan. We have hired Dr. Barbara Rusmore to assist us in this endeavor. She has extensive experience working with other Friends groups in developing plans and other activities. The Board met with her March 25-26 to do our initial work on the plan. We will conduct our own work session later in May and meet again with the consultant in June.

Our initial work has focused on the future goals of the organization. The primary issue is whether we should continue in our present role of educating the public about the SPRNCA or expand into doing advocacy for the river. There is general agreement that the San Pedro River is in trouble, and without changes to water use in the San Pedro River Valley, OUR river will go the way of most of the other rivers in Arizona. That is to say, the riparian habitat and all its associated wildlife will cease to exist. The question before us is what is the most effective role the Friends can play in trying to prevent this from happening. Should we continue to focus on educating the public on the wonders of the SPRNCA, or should we also develop an advocacy plan that spells out the perils of our continued over-use of the valley's aguifer?

Spring Festival/International Migratory Bird Day

By Chris Long

Each year, the Friends of the San Pedro River partner with Sonoran Joint venture, the Bureau of Land Management, and Coronado National Forest to host a Spring Festival. This event occurs in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) that celebrates the world's migratory birds and informs the public about the international and cross-boundary nature of migratory pathways.

This year, there was a full agenda at San Pedro House on May 7, including lectures and presentations on native and xeric plants, snakes and reptiles, Sky Island Alliance, a living history display of flint knapping, displays of Clovis artifacts from the local area, medicinal plants, wagon rides, children's events, plus booths from many local organizations.

A very special event was the dedication of our new Memorial Walkway. If you haven't seen the dedication bricks yet, stop by San Pedro House and see how great they look (and consider purchasing one for a friend, relative, or other "someone" important in your life). This walkway honors the founding members of the Friends, others who were instrumental in establishing the SPRNCA, and volunteers who have put in at least 2,000 hours.

The Spring Festival is usually our largest event of the year, and this year was no different, with over 300 people attending. We want to thank the Walton Family Foundation and the Fort Huachuca Community Spouse's Club for grants that helped to underwrite the event, keeping it free to the public. Many thanks go out to all the volunteers who made the day a success. We all owe a big THANK YOU to Laura Mackin, our bookstore manager, who spent countless hours coordinating the displays and exhibitors and arranging the "behind-the-scenes" actions that are needed to pull off such a large event.

Fairbank Days

By Chris Long

Once again, our winter/spring Fairbank Days were a great success. We had about 300 people attend each event. The Tombstone Territorial Actors did a terrific job of recreating the "Great Fairbank Train Robbery." Father Christmas (as played by Judah Maccabee) arrived in a pony cart just in time for the holidays. The Old Pueblo Archaeology Center added to our knowledge of local history with presentation on the "Ancient People of Arizona" and "Lifestyle of the Hohokam." Soldiers of the Tucson Presidio Garrison once again demonstrated the technology and military tactics of the 18th century. Music was provided at each event by Jim Whitesell and his band. They always add so much to the festivity.

These events take a great deal of planning and organization. FSPR thanks Anne and Bob Graf for all their efforts. So many others also put in their time – walks docents Richard Bauer, Ron Serviss,



Spanish Presidio re-enactors.

Ron Stewart, and Dwight Long. Schoolhouse volunteers Sally Rosén, Kathy Holland, Terri McCabe, and Mary Beth Sutor. Renell Stewart and Jeannie Bragg collected admission donations. Bonnie Winslow and Michael Bragg made sure that the parking area was under control. Special thanks go to Tina and Jack Lundell, the Fairbank site hosts, for all their help on everything! I am sure I forgot someone, as there were so many wonderful volunteers that helped make these events the great success they were.



Participants in April 2011 docent training.

Docent Training

By Chris Long

Our April docent class graduated seven new docents: Eric Andersen, Bob Spahle, Pete Sockness, Leona Burford, Linda Burford, Tess Jurek, and Catherine Newell. Sally Rosén, who is already a docent, went through the class for the second time. Leona Burford is a high school student who used the docent class as a project for her Girl Scout Silver Award. Following the class, she led her Scout troop and other teenagers on a special walk at the river. Many thanks to the time and effort these folks put in during the training and will continue to put in as docents. Also, we owe a thank you to Tom Clancy for organizing the class sessions and field exercises and to Dutch Nagle who acted as mentor during the sessions. We have a wonderful group of presenters who offer they time at no cost to FSPR - Tom Wood, Ron Stewart, Hank and Pricilla Brodkin, Dwight Long, Cado Daly, Bob Strain, Tricia Gerrodette, John Porter, Alan Blixt, Sandy Kunzer, and John Rose. The amount of expertise that we have available among FSPR members is extraordinary.

Wish List

By Ron Serviss

Renell Stewart has been responsible for monitoring our membership this past year, sending out renewal notices and responding to new membership applications. Under her watchful eye, we've seen a steady growth in our membership numbers. But now that she is assuming the duties of Treasurer, we are looking for someone to take over her membership duties.

The position requires about 4-5 hours per week, although some months are busier than others. You should have some computer skills; familiarity with Excel is helpful. You also need to be able to visit our office at BLM Headquarters when new applications arrive. Here is an opportunity to become more involved with the Friends without making a big commitment. If you're interested or have questions, contact Ron Serviss at 432-6773 or serviss.ron@gmail.com. Thanks.

Changes to the Board

By Ron Serviss

Tom Arnold has been on the Board for the past few years and served as our Treasurer during that time. He has also been an active volunteer at San Pedro House and at many events. Unfortunately, Tom will be leaving the area in June and has submitted his resignation to the Board of Directors. We thank him for his service to the Friends and wish him all the best in his next adventure.

While we are sad to see Tom go, we are happy to announce that Renell Stewart has agreed to fill out the remainder of Tom's term on the Board and serve as our Treasurer. Renell had extensive experience in budgeting and fund management while employed by the federal government and, while those accounts had many more zeros in them than appear in our budget, her experience should serve us well.

Renell and her husband Ron have been very active in the Friends in a number of areas, having taken both of our docent trainings, volunteering at the Fairbank bookstore, managing the membership (see Wish List article), and many other activities. The Friends thank them for their energy and commitment. Welcome to the Board, Renell.

San Pedro River Clean-ups

By Ron Serviss

Previously, we informed you of our partnering with the Arizona Water Sentinels and Huachuca Audubon to do three on-going activities along the San Pedro River. Huachuca Audubon is responsible for monitoring water depth at a number of wells in the SPRNCA, as well as testing for water quality in the river. The Friends are responsible for organizing two river clean-ups each year.

Our first clean-up occurred on December 4, 2010 and covered the river from the US-Mexico Border north to Highway 92. As reported in the last newsletter, we had a large turn-out of volunteers, as well as BLM staff and SCAs, and we collected an astonishing amount of trash along a stretch that initially seemed rather pristine.

On April 2, we met at the Hereford Bridge Trail Head to clean a 5-mile stretch north of the bridge. Although the turnout of volunteers was lower, our numbers were augmented by a group of soldiers from Fort Huachuca and a contingent of the Arizona Conservation Corps. This was a difficult stretch to clean, as there are fewer trails and lots of bush-whacking through mesquite sections was required. Despite the hardships, we were again able to clean a great deal of trash from the area. Our thanks go out to all those who assisted. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

These clean-ups have been so successful that Ranger Bob Steele and the Friends have decided to schedule more than the original two planned with the Water Sentinels. The third clean-up occurred on May 14, covering a short stretch south of the Hereford Bridge.

It still amazes me how much trash we can pull from an area that, at first glance, looks pristine! A dumpster-full of trash bags were left at the Hereford Bridge Trail Head, plus there were two bags left at a ranch on the east side of the river and at least eight tires removed. If we were able to accumulate all the trash from the three clean-ups into one pile, it would be both an impressive display and also a reminder of the constant stewardship required to keep the riparian area in the condition we have all come to inspect. We thank each of you for your contribution to that effort.

The final clean-up before the monsoons will be Saturday, June 25 at 7 a.m. We will let you know more details as they are worked out.

It is important to note that the mood in Washington to reduce our national debt by cutting back on non-essential programs will significantly impact what BLM can accomplish along the river. For example, BLM has already experienced significant cuts in staff and SCAs. The latter did a lot of clean-up, working with Ranger Bob. If we want to experience the river in its most natural state, it will require us to pitch in and assist BLM in its efforts. I hope you will join us on a future clean-up effort.

Dedicated Walkway

By Dutch Nagle

In the February 2011 issue of this newsletter, we told you about the proposed "Dedication Walkway." We have now completed the installation and finalized our procedures for ordering and placing bricks in the new Dedication Walkway. We are offering our membership the opportunity to have a brick placed in it.

As part of the Spring Festival, there was a ribboncutting ceremony for the walkway. Several bricks had already been engraved with the names of those who worked hard to support the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). These include our original board members, some special friends, volunteers who have each contributed over 2000 hours of service, and donors who have given substantial contributions. The walkway is located on the west side of the San Pedro House and extends from the flagpole to the amphitheater behind the house.

The Friends of the San Pedro River are now offering you the opportunity to have your name, a business name, or the name of a friend or loved one engraved on one of the bricks. Bricks are offered in three different categories;

- 1. A 10" x 10" brick with up to 6 lines of 15 characters each for \$100.
- 2. A 10" x 15" brick with up to 6 lines of 15 characters each for \$200.
- 3. A 10" x 15" brick with up to 6 lines of 15 characters each plus a 4" x 4" graphic for \$300.

The amount given for the commemorative brick is considered a contribution and is tax deductible.

The proceeds of this endeavor will be used to support the SPRNCA.

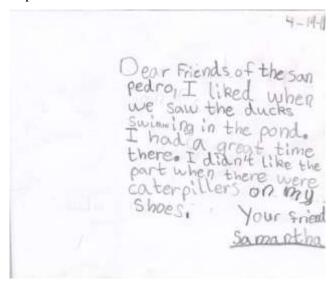
For your convenience, application forms are available on our website (SanPedroRiver.org), at the San Pedro House, or at our office at 1763 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista. You can call our office (459-2555) and request that an application be mailed to you.

School Children Natural History Education Program

By John Rose

School field trips to the river have remained popular, despite high fuel prices. Since the end of March, we have hosted or scheduled over 350 students. Schools from Sierra Vista, Bisbee, Palominas, Naco, Tombstone, and Douglas have visited or will visit the River. We also participated in a field trip at the Brown Canyon Ranch hosted by the Friends of Brown Canyon.

Students often write thank-you notes after their trips. Here's one from a Palominas student:



New Mounted Bird Checklist at SPH

By Robert Weissler

Soon, birders will notice a new checklist of birds mounted on the wall in front of San Pedro House. The checklist will make it both easier to read and easier to mark the dates of birds recently seen near San Pedro House and elsewhere in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). The checklist is based on Dave Kreuper's original Annotated Checklist of Birds of SPRNCA, with revisions based on personal

communications of more-recent sightings. It includes indications of seasonality: winter resident, migrant/transient, and summer breeder, or simply permanent resident if not otherwise indicated. The new bird board project was guided by Tom Clancy and Dutch Nagle with the generous effort of Brooke Gebow at the Nature Conservancy to prepare the machine-readable document and help from Glenn Frederick at the Forest Service to render it on poster board. I provided a review of seasonal occurrence (which is a bit tricky, especially for some species that overwinter in small numbers). We hope birders and nature enthusiasts will use the information this board provides to enhance their visit to the SPRNCA.

Volunteers

By Chris Long

One thing you can certainly say for the Friends of the San Pedro River is that we have an outstanding group of volunteers. As of the end of April, we have contributed 7,335 hours to the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. That is about 4 full-time people at the standard BLM volunteer rate. We have 74 active volunteers so far this year (volunteers with at least 1 hour), including 49 with more than 25 hours. When visitors come to both San Pedro House and the Fairbank schoolhouse, they are amazed that we can keep these facilities open with only volunteer hours and a single bookstore manager. Add to this the many hours spent by volunteers and docents on walks, hikes, school programs, bird walks, community presentations, special events, and all the behind-the-scenes things that have to happen to make all the other things happen, FSPR is a truly amazing group. Here is a BIG THANK YOU to all the volunteers. You are what make FSPR great.

Volunteer with the Friends

By Bette Ford

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the Friends. Without them, most of our services would not be possible. The two most-visible categories of volunteers are docents and bookstore, but there are many projects "behind the scenes" that are vitally important, some of them requiring specific talents (e.g., photography/videography, site maintenance, computers). Consider beginning your volunteering with a single project or activity. Then, try another, to see what appeals to you.

Many docents start out working in the bookstore and find they enjoy meeting people. Even if you aren't a birder or don't know the history of the area, there are many books and folders containing the answers. Telling a visitor "I don't know, but let's look in this book..." is a perfectly acceptable answer and then you both learn something! Docent training helps with those questions, even if you are not interested in leading walks.

Being a Friends volunteer brings a great reward—you meet the nicest, most-interesting people from all over the world!

The Wet and the Dry

By Sandy Kunzer

Data: On 18 and 19 June 2010, about 37% of the main stem of the San Pedro River in the US and Mexico showed water in the channel.

Fallible recollection: "Sonny, I've lived here nigh on 127 years and this is the driest/hottest/wettest/windiest/snowiest/cloudi est/what-ever-ist that I can remember."

As a scientist and one interested in the intersection of science and public policy, I assure you that I am much more interested in the former than the latter.

Since 1999, teams of your neighbors have been mapping surface water on the San Pedro River in late June, in order to provide a snapshot of conditions during the driest time of the year. While these data have the advantage of covering most of the river, they lack the repetitive nature of flow data from the stream gages. However, combining the two gives a more-complete picture of the variations in our river and possible trends toward the future. As with all such data, one data point is interesting, but not something to be joyful about or agonize over. However, as the years go on, we will build a database that WILL help define the expected range of behavior.

The river is divided into segments of about 4 miles. Each segment is traversed on foot, on horseback, or by all-terrain vehicle. Only surface water or dry stretches longer than 30 feet are recorded using hand-held GPS units. Teams are at least three people; some may have as many as six. The data are then fed into a computer and a map is generated. The map shows where the river is wet and where it is dry, and can be compared to previous years' maps.



Example of massive habitat change. Babocomari River ca. 1890 near junction with San Pedro River. Showing marshy, treeless conditions (except for trees on raised area where Fairbank built). G. Roskruge. (Courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society/Tucson, AHS Photo Number PC114_B2_F31_46404.)



Babocomari Babcomari River near junction with San Pedro River in 1962. Showing entrenched river on left with many trees. Stake 150. J. R. Hastings. Trees & brush obscured view of San Pedro River. (Courtesy of the USGS Desert Laboratory Repeat Photography Collection).

Big Fish & Many Marshes Were in Upper San Pedro River

By Gerald Noonan

Three-foot-long fish were once abundant at the junction of the Babocomari and San Pedro Rivers. Eighteen-inch fish were common in other parts of the Upper San Pedro.

- Until the latter part of the 19th century, fish from the river were commercially sold in Tombstone.
- Marshes and cienegas were abundant in places that now have dense gallery forests.
- Most trees now found along the river originated in the 1960s or later.
- The river did not used to be located in an arroyo and was formerly scarcely cut into the surrounding floodplain.
- The San Pedro River and most other southwestern rivers have undergone massive habitat changes beginning around the 1860s.
- See former habitat conditions and massive changes by viewing one of the free PDF files at http://sciencequest.webplus.net/noonan%20san%20pedro%20river%20papers.html.

Upper San Pedro Water Sentinels – Local Partnership Addressing Global Concern

By Éva Nagy

Water is quickly becoming the focal point of discussions about our future worldwide: its availability, its quality, its distribution, and its uses. It is no longer just a topic associated with impoverished African countries like Burkina Faso or despotic arrogance like Stalin's river-reversal project; developed nations like Australia and the United States are facing increasing challenges to meet growing demand for water and maintain its quality.

Here in Cochise County, we're fortunate to have a flowing river, the San Pedro, and a conservation area protecting it, the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). We have a riparian ecosystem that we can monitor, measure, learn from, and take steps to conserve as we continue to balance human needs with those of our natural environment. In fact, that was the very topic of the last World Water Day on March 22: Water for *Cities: Responding to the Urban Challenge.* And that was the very day that a group called the Upper San Pedro Water Sentinels, born from the partnering of the Huachuca Audubon Society (HAS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR) under the auspices of the Sierra Club, set out on its second event of 2011.



The Water Sentinels are a citizen scientist group who participate in a program focused on three projects: river cleanup and rehabilitation, water quality testing, and well water-level monitoring.

The first event undertaken by the group occurred last December, when teams of volunteers walked along the San Pedro from the Mexican border to the Highway 92 Bridge and collected trash. The second river segment slated for this activity stretches from the Hereford Bridge to Hunter Wash.

The second type of project the Water Sentinels engage in – water quality testing – was officially started when volunteers from the Sierra Vista, Benson, and Bisbee areas gathered in January for training provided by Steve Pawlowski, the Sierra Club Water Sentinels Program Coordinator from Phoenix; Dr. Channah Rock, Water Quality Specialist from the University of Arizona Maricopa Agricultural Center; and BLM hydrologist Paul Brown. Sandy Bahr, the Conservation Outreach Director of the Sierra Club's Grand Canyon Chapter, gave an engaging welcome speech and set the tone for this dedicated effort.

Five sampling sites were selected for water monitoring along the upper San Pedro River: in Palominas, upstream of the Highway 92 bridge; at the Hereford bridge; at the San Pedro House; at Charleston bridge; and at the Highway 82 bridge near Fairbank.

Each sampling site will be monitored quarterly in 2011. The first monitoring event was held on February 10 by three teams led by Tricia Gerrodette, Ted Mouras, and Dutch Nagle. Steve Pawlowski was also on hand to assist with the test equipment; he would also collect the test samples at the end of the day.

The purpose of these outings is to measure water quality through parameters like water temperature, dissolved oxygen content, total dissolved solids, pH, and conductivity. Flow is also noted, along with the color and odor of the water, any debris present; photos are taken to complete the record. The other important activity is the collection of grab samples: dipping a sterile container in the river, capping, labeling, and putting it in a cooler for transportation. The grab samples are taken to a Tucson laboratory for *E. coli* testing.

The third Water Sentinels project is the monitoring of groundwater levels, using a special measuring tape, in 13 wells at Murray Springs for the BLM. Groundwater data collection by the volunteers began in February and will continue monthly throughout the year. The aim is to keep a close eye on groundwater levels that may threaten the artifacts at the Clovis archeological site.

The Water Sentinels invite everyone interested in learning more about these projects and/or participating in any or all of them to contact the FSPR at (520) 459-2555 or visit www.sanpedroriver.org.

Government Shut-down (Almost)

By Ron Serviss

I'm sure all of you are aware that our government in Washington almost shut down last month due to its inability to reach agreement on a federal budget. You may not realize how that impacted the SPRNCA and the Friends.

We were aware, as we watched events play out in Washington, that a shut-down of the government would impact us in some way, we just didn't know how or when. On Friday afternoon, April 8, we received a call from BLM staff that the Tucson office had decided to close the SPRNCA over the weekend, no matter what happened in Washington. They had to make a decision at some point and, due to staffing requirements, could not wait until the last minute to see what might happen in Washington. We then contacted Laura at the San Pedro House and Sally at Fairbank to ask them to inform their volunteers that the bookstores would be closed until further notice. We also contacted Richard Bauer to cancel the cultural walk scheduled for that Saturday. Richard went to the trailhead Saturday morning to let any attendees know what had happened.

On Saturday morning, we received a second call from BLM staff that, given the agreement reached late Friday night in Washington, they would reopen the SPRNCA on Sunday. We again contacted our bookstore managers and they were able to reach their volunteers and reopen the bookstores Sunday morning.

We thank everyone involved for their patience and understanding and for the hard work they do week after week. We could not exist as an organization without their dedication. A big thanks to each of you.

Membership

New Members for February-April 2011

Eric Anderson, Sierra Vista, AZ Margery & Paul Bates, Bisbee, AZ Sigrid Limtiaco, Sierra Vista, AZ Kathleen Ross & John Newton, Baltimore, MD Rebecca Saltonstall, Estes Park, CO Neil Spink, Norton Shores, MI

Renewing Members for February-April 2011

John Barthelme Richard Bauer Jeanie & Michael Bragg Sara Branyon & Janet Briswalter Hedy & Kelton Burbank Tom & Lin Clancy Sherry & David Cunningham Mary Peace Douglas Holly Draper & Richard Moon Leah Frankel Betty & Bob Goble James Godshalk & Marjorie Lundy Karen & Jim Havlena Lisa & Vance Havnes Wes Iensen Sandy & Bob Kenny Lori & James Kovash **DeForest Lewis** Teresa & Reuben Miranda Dee & Al Puff Joan & Scott Robinson Regina Rutledge **Derek Sanderson** Denise & Doug Snow Mona & Harvey Stanbrough Mary Beth Sutor & Lynn Andersen

Hello from Your New Editor

My name is Sue Leskiw. My husband Tom and I are Palominas "snowbirds" from Eureka, CA. Last winter, I volunteered in the San Pedro House bookstore. I currently serve as newsletter editor for the North Group Sierra Club (northwestern CA), Redwood Region Audubon Society, and Friends of the Arcata Marsh. I'm happy to help out the Friends in the same manner. If you'd like to contact me, my e-mail is sueleskiw@suddenlink.net.

Points of Contact

- President Ron Serviss
- Vice President Chris Long
- Directors Tom Clancy, Gary Noonan, John Rose, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart, Robert Weissler
- Treasurer Renell Stewart
- Docent Activities Tom Clancy, Chris Long
- Education Program John Rose, Ron Serviss
- Bookstore Manager Laura Mackin
- Bookkeeper Pam Collins
- Program Manager Kathryn Ojerio

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 sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org.

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AZ 85635

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Website: sanpedroriver.org

Friends of the San Pedro River is a volunteer, nonprofit, nonpolitical organization providing support to the Bureau of Land Management in its stewardship of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA).

Friends of the San Pedro River - Annual Events Calendar

Understanding the River

• Interpretive Walks

Every Saturday at San Pedro House 9 AM - October thru March 8 AM - April thru September

Evening Walks

5:30 PM at San Pedro House June 15 July 20 August 17 September 21

FSPR Hikes

May 21 – 7 AM – Lewis Springs (SPH)
Jun 11 – 7 AM – Hereford
Jul 16 – 7:30 AM – Escapule
Aug 20 – 7 AM – Clanton Ranch (at Murray
Springs)
Sept 17 – 7 AM – Hereford to SPH (SPH)
Nov 19 – 9 AM – St. David Cienega (at Natural
Research Area)
For details see FSPR 2011 Hike Flyer

FSPR Members-Only Events

Charleston Walk – TBD Contention Walk – TBD Potluck Lunches Annual Meeting

Birding Walks

FSPR Bird Walks

At San Pedro House
May 28 – 7 AM
June 8 & 25 – 7 AM
July 13 & 23 – 7 AM
August 10 & 27 – 7 AM
September 14 & 24 – 7 AM
October 12 & 22 – 8 AM
November 9 & 26 – 8 AM
December 14 & 24 – 8 AM

FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park
8 AM - October thru March
7 AM - April thru September

FSPR History Walks

June 11 – 8 AM – Murray Springs July 9 – 8 AM – Presidio Terrenate August 13 – 8 AM – Fairbank September 10 – 8 AM – Millville Oct 8 – 9 AM – Clanton (at Escapule) Nov 12 – 9 AM – Murray Springs

FSPR Special Events

Ghostly Halloween

October 22 – at Fairbank Historic Townsite. 6:30 PM walk for small children, 7:30 PM walk for bigger kids. Watch out! There are ghosts and goblins out there as you hike with flashlights to the Fairbank Cemetery. This is a Halloween adventure for the children. Bring water and a flashlight; snacks are provided. Fee \$5 for adults, kids under 12 free.

SABO Hummingbird Banding

Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory conducts hummingbird banding in the spring and fall at San Pedro House. Check www.sabo.org for dates and times.