



# Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

Spring 2013

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## River Cleanup April 7

Our first 2013 San Pedro River cleanup is scheduled for Sunday, April 7. Meet at the Palominas Trailhead at 8 a.m. We will cover about a 4-mile section of relatively flat, easy hiking. Volunteer up to 4 hours. Spring migration should be in full swing, so we should be serenaded during our efforts. We will be joined by a good-sized group from Fort Huachuca, so should be able to get a lot accomplished. Dress to get dirty and bring lots of water, sunscreen, and snacks. Contact Ron Serviss if you can join us or need any additional information (520-432-6773).

## Natural-Cultural Lecture Series Kicks Off April 18

At your request, FSPR is starting a series of lectures on natural and cultural topics related to SPRNCA. The first one, on the Spanish and Mexican history of Cochise County, will be Thursday, April 18 at 7 p.m. Rebecca Orozco will present "La Frontera: A Brief History of the Cochise County Borderlands." Rebecca is a history instructor at Cochise College. This topic is pertinent to the Presidio and other early Hispanic and Native American sites in SPRNCA.

The program will be held in Room 702 in Building 700, Community Outreach at Cochise College in Sierra Vista. Please attend and show your support for our ongoing efforts to inform our members and the public about SPRNCA. Nonmembers are also welcome.

## Wild & Scenic Film Festival April 13-14

*By Robert Weissler*

For 25 years, FSPR has been working to bring awareness to this special place and to educate the public on its incredible natural and historic wonders. We have been invited to host the 11th Annual Wild and Scenic Film Festival, North America's premier collection of short films on the environment. We have selected 12 films that we hope will enthrall and motivate you, and perhaps even inspire you to get outside and enjoy nature and join us in our efforts to preserve it.

The film program is centered on water conservation and river preservation themes. The Friends are proud to present its own video, "Our River: A Work in Progress," as part of the program. This video advocates for the protection of the San Pedro River and the groundwater in the aquifer below that sustains its perennial flows through months with little to no precipitation. The value of the river as a scarce resource for resident wildlife, for recreation and education, and for the population living in the valley is emphasized to justify its importance locally. Its value to tourism and migratory birds and other animals demonstrates that its value extends far beyond the borders of the state of Arizona.

The film festival will be presented in two locations on consecutive days: the weekend of April 13 and 14. The Saturday event will be held in the [Community Room of the Student Union](#) on



the [Sierra Vista campus of Cochise College](#) from 6-9 p.m. The College's Science Club has offered its help to carry out the event in Sierra Vista. Then on Sunday, the festival will move to the [Central School Project in Bisbee](#) between 3 and 6 p.m. Tickets that cover both days are \$5 and will be available in early April at the San Pedro House, the Sierra Vista Food Co-op, the Cochise College Science Building, the High Desert Market in Bisbee, and at the door on the days of the event. For further information, visit [www.sanpedroriver.org/filmfest](http://www.sanpedroriver.org/filmfest).

## History Walks

*By Ron Stewart*

The cultural and natural history walks given by the Friends at SPRNCA sites year-round are perhaps our organization's defining activity. Docent-led tours and bird watching walks help us educate the public about SPRNCA and

increase awareness of its priceless natural and cultural resources.

In the last few months, we have seen a marked increase in attendance at our History Walks. Tours at Millville, Murray Springs, Fairbank, and the Presidio have averaged around 25 people each, with up to 48 attending one walk at Fairbank.

There are several likely reasons for this increase: good weather on the tour dates; public interest in these historic sites; and more-intense efforts to spread information about these walks in local newspapers, at libraries, RV campgrounds, and other locations visible to winter visitors.

I think there is another equally important reason for recent successes: our docents. The quality of our tours and walks is first rate and the word-of-mouth advertising this engenders our reaching more people with our organizational message about the special nature of SPRNCA. Richard Bauer, Dwight Long, Tom Clancy, Ron Serviss, Bette Ford, Ron Stewart, Sandy Kunzer, Gabrielle Lafargue, Robert Weissler, and Jim Peterson have executed an ambitious program of cultural walks for the Friends.

Please consider attending some of our walks and events. Coming up soon are the following cultural walks and hikes: April 6, 8 a.m.—members-only walk to Boston Mill; April 20, 9 a.m.—Millville; May 11, 8 a.m.—Lewis Springs. Members are welcome to bring nonmember friends to members-only events.

## FSPR Welcomes Its Newest Board Member

At its March meeting, the Friends welcomed Army Major Steve Ogle to the Board of Directors. Though Steve is relatively new to the area, he has already spent a great deal of time hiking and biking along the San Pedro and has come to appreciate its rich history and culture. He had already logged many volunteer hours with the Friends prior to taking a seat on the Board.

Steve is originally from Indiana and has been in the Army for the past 30 years. He has had numerous duty stations, ranging from the Pentagon in Washington, DC to Bosnia, Iraq, and now Fort Huachuca (for the second time). Steve has been married for 20 years to Linda and they have two children, Matthew, 17, and Mazie, 12.

# Spring Festival

Saturday, May 4, 2013

San Pedro House

International Migratory Bird Day

Life Cycles of Migratory Birds



- 7:00am Bird Walk for experienced birders
- 8:00am Bird Walk for beginning birders and families
- 8:00am Nature Walk to River for families and fun
- 9:00am Landscaping with Native Plants  
by Jan Groth of Cochise County Master Gardeners Association
- 10:00am Snakes Alive!!  
by Gray Hawk Nature Center
- 11:00am Build your own Rainwater Harvesting System  
by Cado Daily of WaterWise, UofA Cooperative Extension
- 12:00pm Lunch & Music  
Pizza lunch with music provided by EarthPicks
- 1:00pm Globally Important Bird Area Re-dedication Ceremony  
The SPRNCA is recognized for its outstanding value to bird conservation
- 4:00pm Hummingbird Banding  
by Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory

**Advance  
Flyer**  
Schedule subject to change  
3/31/13

## Nature Expo & Exhibits

9:00am  
to  
2:00pm

- Native Plant Sale low-water use plants at reasonable prices
- Gray Hawk Nature Center live reptile display
- Ravens-Way Natural Journeys living history display
- Nest Box Building Workshop take-home nest boxes
- Book Signings by local authors Bob Luce and John D. Rose
- Kid's Ramada face painting, animal tattoos, children's activities & more
- Educational & Exhibit Booths by nature-based organizations and agencies



www.sanpedroriver.org (520) 508-4445  
Schedule subject to change



## Executive Director's Report

*By Robert Weissler*

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) and its natural and cultural resources made headlines recently. Murray Springs Clovis Site has been cited as "1 of 5 great places" by Smithsonian Magazine. Meanwhile, the Wall Street Journal covered "A Fight for Water," in which the BLM and others have filed a formal objection to the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR). The objection is in response to ADWR's issuing a Certificate of Water Adequacy to Pueblo del Sol Water Company to support large-scale residential development in Sierra Vista. The article discussed the stakes in this battle for both local development and the future of the San Pedro.

The University of Arizona Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) hosted a 1-day conference on March 5 entitled "Water Security: From the Ground Up." The conference featured presentations ranging from debunking myths related to groundwater withdrawals to Colorado River Basin planning scenarios and the implications of climate change on future supply. Other topics included how to value environmental water needs, banking water for contingencies, the importance of the Groundwater Management Act of 1980, and the need to take prompt action to secure future water supplies. FSPR also participated in a workshop on water resources, environmental services, and decision-making that was hosted by a University of Arizona project with the Udall Center. The workshop involved many members of the Upper San Pedro Partnership and took place at the public library in Sierra Vista.

As part of the National Audubon Society's Western Rivers project, Audubon Arizona is launching a Colorado River Action Network. This network will coordinate with the CLF/Arizona Friends Network to address water policy in the state and water-related initiatives and politics. FSPR will collaborate with this group as it moves forward. Meanwhile, planning for the next wet-dry mapping of SPRNCA in June has started, with The Nature Conservancy taking the lead once again.

Conferences and workshops on rangeland practices and conservation, including the Malpai Science Conference and the St David Workshop,

provided an opportunity to learn about efforts to convert scrublands back to grasslands using prescribed fire, Spike (tebuthiuron) treatments, and mechanical removal of woody vegetation. Such efforts are relevant to the upper San Pedro River Valley, where native grasslands have been lost or altered significantly over the past century or more. Meanwhile, the February meeting of the Hereford Natural Resource Conservation District (NRCD) provided an opportunity to meet members of the ranching community. With groundwater withdrawals being the central threat to the San Pedro River, this community is a potential ally for the environmental community. Conservation-minded ranching preserves low-density land use and light use of the aquifer in the basin, particularly adjacent to SPRNCA, where it functions as a buffer from residential development.

FSPR participated in 3 days of Resource Management Plan (RMP) training with BLM staff and partners from Fort Huachuca and other local organizations. The key issue is how FSPR can call its members to action during the scoping phase to submit substantive comments to BLM. Such comments can influence the range of alternatives BLM considers and help determine which ones receive detailed analysis. Once BLM has published the draft RMP/EIS for SPRNCA, FSPR will rally its members once again during the public comment period to ensure the FSPR mission and conservation priorities are well served by the RMP.

The time has arrived to have FSPR docents and other volunteers read, complete, and sign the volunteer service agreements with BLM (just once for the entire fiscal year). FSPR will mail each volunteer the agreement form to sign, along with the risk management worksheet to read. If YOU volunteer with the Friends and have not completed and signed a volunteer agreement this year, please contact us via email to [fspr@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:fspr@sanpedroriver.org).

Mark your calendars now for the annual Spring Festival on Saturday, May 4 at San Pedro House (see p. 3). Regarding the BLM (and FSPR) office move this spring from the San Pedro Project Office in Sierra Vista to join the US Forest Service in its new Ranger District Office on State Highway 92, stay tuned—the move does not have a firm date yet. In the meantime, we hope to see you at the film festival in April (see p. 1)!



*Crowds at Fairbank Day. © Ron Stewart.*

## **Fairbank Day**

*By Ron Stewart*

The Fairbank town site definitely was not a ghost town on March 2! Its population grew from 2 (our great site hosts, Kurt and Kathy Diteman) to over 500, as visitors poured in to attend the Friends' Fairbank Day event. This was the first Fairbank Day since 2011 and, by any measure, it was a great success.

This year's celebration had the theme "A Thousand Years of History in a Day," but the real theme was cooperation between local historic organizations. A number of sister organizations participated in our event, sharing their stories with our visitors. In attendance were representatives of the Tubac Presidio State Park, the Amerind Foundation, the US Forest Service, Tombstone Archives, Kentucky Camp, and the Bureau of Land Management. Giving presentations and exhibitions were B Troop, the 2nd Catalonian Volunteer Infantry, Ravens-Way, and Old Pueblo Archeology. The Tombstone Territorial Actors staged a re-enactment of the infamous train robbery, complete with gunfire. I am glad to report that Jeff Milton once again foiled Three-Fingered Jack and the other outlaws.

Another attraction was a trio of authors who spoke to the public and signed copies of their books. They were John Rose, who wrote books on Charleston and Fairbank; Betty Escapule, who grew up at the San Pedro House; and Suzanne Arnold, who authored a book about Hereford. Frances Goodman was on hand to display Fairbank artifacts she had collected. She and her brother Robert Darnell talked with visitors (and docents) about their upbringing at Fairbank. The musical group Dry and Dusty serenaded our visitors throughout the event. The Dragoon Market and Café prepared and sold food to the hungry among us.

The success of this event can be traced to the hard work of a number of volunteers and BLM professionals:

- Ron Stewart and Laura Mackin helped organize the event and the entire Friends' Board of Directors contributed to execute the many aspects of the event.
- Jim Mahoney and Chris Schraeger of BLM helped us obtain the permissions and support we needed from the government. Our site hosts from both Fairbank and San Pedro House—Curt and Cathy Diteman and Mark and Debby Ford—spent the entire time in the parking lots preventing what could have easily become parking lot Armageddon.



*B Troop soldier re-enactors. © Ron Stewart.*

- Ron Serviss, Tom Clancy, Richard Bauer, Ron Stewart, Bette Ford, and Jim Petersen led or escorted tours of Terrenate and Fairbank.
- Many other volunteers made key contributions: Dwight Long performed many tasks, including assembling the stage. Chris Long, Renell Stewart, Robert Weissler, and Bette Ford greeted visitors and collected donations. Steve Ogle, Judah Maccabee, Eric Andersen, Leslie Baird, Mike Foster, and Tom Wood helped park cars, set up and tear down, and other important tasks.
- Sally Rosén and the Fairbank Schoolhouse crew—Kathy Holland, Gabrielle Lafargue, Randy Sullivan, and Michael White—handled a crush of visitors.
- Dutch Nagle and Jane Chambers manned our FSPR “Bone Box” booth. Laura Mackin ran a booth outside selling soft drinks and books.

We plan to do this again next year. If you are interested in helping or have ideas for the event, please let Robert Weissler or Ron Stewart know. Based on our success this year, we intend to broaden the participation of other groups and do even more to publicize it and encourage attendance.



## President’s Report

*By Ron Serviss*

I have to admit that there have been times over the past 3 years when I have become quite frustrated by what appeared to me to be a lack of appreciation for what our organization stands for and for what we accomplish day in and day out. I am delighted to report that this frustration came to a screeching halt during the recent dedication ceremonies at Murray Springs. During this brief event, I heard repeated praises from several individuals that we don’t get to interact very frequently.

The new BLM State Director, Ray Suazo (see photo, p. 7), attended this dedication. While we were having a general chat, he reminded me that a few years ago, he had attended a kick-off event at Fairbank for trail work in SPRNCA. He had gone on one of our tours out to the cemetery and hadn’t forgotten how much he had learned and how much he enjoyed our docent tour. That was my first feel-good moment.

Later, I got to talk to Dr. Vance Haynes, the primary discoverer and researcher of the Murray Springs Clovis Kill Site, and the guest-of-honor for the dedication. After I introduced myself, he offered his appreciation for all the good things FSPR does. His daughter told me that he thinks so much of our organization that he purchased a membership in the Friends for her, as well as himself. We got to talk briefly about some potential projects at Murray Springs that might make it a better experience for visitors. He also indicated he would be more than happy to come and speak to our membership one evening. Feel-good moment number two.

These two brief moments may seem of little significance, but for me, having a state director and an internationally recognized researcher volunteer their appreciation for our Friends group was a much-needed lift. The important thing from this is that they were talking about us and about you. No matter what your role in our organization, be it volunteering your time and/or your financial support, it collectively creates the organization that they were praising. I hope you feel as good about this as I do.

I can’t say it enough, Thank you for all you do on behalf of our San Pedro River.



*Ron Serviss and Ray Suazo at Murray Springs Dedication. © Robert Weissler.*

## **13,000-Year-Old Clovis Site Dedicated as National Historic Landmark**

*[Courtesy of Diane Drobka, Public Affairs Specialist, BLM Gila District]*

More than 80 volunteers, visitors, and BLM staff celebrated the dedication of the Murray Spring Clovis Site National Historic Landmark on March 23. The event was hosted by the BLM Tucson Field Office, the National Park Service, and the Friends of the San Pedro River.

The dedication took place at the site, which is located within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) near Sierra Vista, Arizona. The two-hour event included speeches, the unveiling of a plaque noting the designation, exhibits of Clovis (distinctive spear) points and mammoth fossils, and docent-led tours.

Dr. C. Vance Haynes and Dr. Peter Mehringer, both from the University of Arizona, discovered this internationally important site in 1966. Haynes led the excavation and research from 1967 to 1971. This Ice Age site yielded a multiple bison kill, a mammoth kill, and possibly a horse kill. Scattered across the buried occupation surface with the bones of late Pleistocene animals were several thousand stone tools and waste flakes from their manufacture and repair.

Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced his designation of the Murray Springs Clovis Site as a National Historic Landmark, which are nationally significant historic places, on October 17, 2012.

Among those in attendance was Dr. Barbara Mills, professor and director of the School of Anthropology at the University of Arizona and curator of archaeology at the Arizona State Museum in Tucson. Mills serves on the National Parks Advisory Board, where she was involved in reviewing and recommending Murray Springs as a National Historic Landmark.

Arizona State Director Ray Suazo highlighted the importance of cultural tourism in Arizona. “More than 87 percent of in-state travelers and 72 percent of out-of-state visitors list cultural heritage tourism as their main reason for traveling in Arizona. That illustrates just how important cultural resources are for our tourism economy,” he said.

Cochise County already boasts an amazing diversity of places to visit. Within the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area alone, culture sites span a 13,000-year period of time beginning with the Murray Springs Clovis Site and Lehner Mammoth-Kill Site. Visitors can “time travel” to visit the Spanish Presidio Santa Cruz de Terranate, abandoned in 1780, as well as mining towns such as Millville which, from 1881 to 1882, produced \$1,380,336 in bullion. Thanks to recent restoration efforts, the 1920s schoolhouse at the former railroad town of Fairbank is used as a visitor center and bookstore.

Lane Baker, the Superintendent of Chiricahua National Monument, Fort Bowie National Historic Site, and Coronado Memorial noted the importance of Murray Springs. “Out of 2,540 National Historic Landmarks in the nation, none are older—or perhaps more deeply meaningful—than pivotal archeological sites such as this,” she said. “Murray Springs has achieved our nation’s ultimate level of historical merit.” She congratulated the BLM for protecting and interpreting Arizona’s 44th National Historic Landmark and thanked BLM archaeologist Jane Childress for her



*Attendees at Murray Springs Dedication. © Diane Drobka, BLM.*

“determination to produce a nomination that was compelling, informative, and convincing.”

Childress recalled her favorite times working at the San Pedro. “Some of my best memories of Murray Springs are of bringing kids out here with the replica artifacts and the real mammoth teeth,” she said. “We had so much fun searching for micro-fossils. When kids are having fun, learning is easy.”

The keynote speaker was Dr. Vance Haynes. He shared his memory of discovering the site in 1966. “I knew immediately that it would be very important when I walked down Curry Draw and found mammoth bones poking out from the eroded dry streambed,” Haynes said. He and his colleague, Dr. Peter Mehringer, quickly made grant applications and it wasn’t long before the National Geographic Society and National Science Foundation were eager for them to get excavations started.

Haynes and his team from the University of Arizona labored for four years, yielding evidence of what would become the earliest well-documented culture in the Americas. The stone artifacts and fossil bones they found, allowed archaeologists, paleontologists, and other scientists to develop a better idea of what life was like for both the hunters and the hunted in the most recent Ice Age. Murray Springs came to be considered as among the most important archaeological sites of the day.

Murray Springs has been described as the largest single sample of Clovis flint-knapping activity known in the western United States. Also recovered was a remarkable mammoth-

bone tool, interpreted to have been a spear shaft straightening wrench. It is 10 inches long and nearly one inch thick. The tool is the only one of its kind ever found in the Americas.

A hallmark of the Clovis culture is the distinctively shaped, fluted stone spear point named the Clovis point after Clovis, New Mexico, where they were first discovered in the 1930s. The culture appears to have been short lived (300-500 years) yet Clovis sites are found throughout the United States, northern Mexico and southern Canada.

Haynes and members of the Friends of the San Pedro River displayed both original artifacts and casts of bones and points. The dedication concluded with Friends docents leading tours of the site.

Learn more at the BLM Murray Spring Clovis Site webpage: <http://www.blm.gov/az/st/en/prog/cultural/murray.html>



*Dr. Vance Hayes from University of Arizona, who excavated site over 40 years ago. © Robert Weissler.*





*(Left) Carrying the tapestry to the border wall. © Tom Leskiw. (Right) Trekker John Davis flanked by activists in jaguar masks. © Kim Kim Vacanu, Wildlands Network. (Below) Jaguar tail; Stephanie Bowman; jaguar head. © Sue Leskiw.*

## Jaguar Tapestry at Naco

*By Sue Leskiw*

On February 28, my husband Tom and I walked across the border from Naco (AZ) to participate in an event to welcome conservationist John Davis on the first leg of his human-powered journey in support of wildlife corridors. We joined nearly 40 others—both US and Mexican residents—in a Naco (Sonora) city park to participate in a Yaqui blessing ceremony before helping to carry a long jaguar art piece to the base of the border wall. The wall represents a major obstacle to wild animals large and small that are trying to follow their traditional pathways across the border.

John will be trekking nearly 10 months and 5000 miles between Hermosillo, Mexico and Fernie, British Columbia, along a visioned safe western walkway for both wildlife and humans. In 2011, he had hiked, biked, and paddled 7600 miles from the Florida Keys to Quebec’s Gaspé Peninsula to highlight potential pathways in the eastern US. [For more information on John’s walk, visit <http://trekwest.org/>

The jaguar art piece—entitled “Sewing Spots Together”—was the brainchild of Tucson artist/educator Stephanie Bowman (center below). She created two 8-foot-long panels from twin bedsheets, one depicting the head and one the tail of a jaguar (right-left below). Then, classrooms, museums, and other groups made their own panels that highlight the fantastic biodiversity of the jaguar’s range between the Amazon rainforest and the Sonoran desert. The panels were then fastened together with saguaro cactus ribs into an ever-elongating mobile art piece that can be carried full length or folded in various patterns, depending on the number of people participating. [For more information on “Sewing Spots Together,” go to <http://www.bowmansart.com/documents/SEWING%20SPOTS%20TOGETHER%20Project.pdf>.]



## History Tour of Charleston

*By Sue Leskiw*

On an overcast Sunday morning in late January, over 30 people joined local historian and docent Richard Bauer and local author John Rose for an FSPR members-only guided hike to the ghost town of Charleston. Bauer is an expert on local history, while Rose recently published two books (available at San Pedro House and Fairbank Schoolhouse) on the history of the San Pedro River Valley. He is an authority on Tombstone, Charleston, and other early settlements along the river.

The area was wracked with warfare until 1765, when the Apaches ran off the agricultural Sobaipuri tribe. There was little reason for white settlers to go there until silver was discovered at Tombstone in 1877. All six ore stamping and processing mills were built on hillsides on the east side of the San Pedro, so loaded mule-drawn carts did not have to cross the river. The towns to service workers were built on the west side. Water to run the mills was diverted from the San Pedro.

Charleston was founded in 1878 by Amos Stowe across the river from Millville. It was perhaps the wildest of the local ghost towns, even more violent than Tombstone. Its main "lawman" was James (Jim) Burnett, a corrupt Justice of the Peace. Following a disagreement with Cochise County, Burnett stated that he would run his court independently and began administering justice on the spot and pocketing the fines collected. He once fined "Curly Bill" Brocius, an employee of the Clanton Ranch (located 5 miles from town), \$50 for disrupting a church service. Another shady character involved in policing Charleston was Constable Jerry Barton, who stuttered, was built like a tank, and adept at breaking necks.

In the 1880s, the San Pedro was a very narrow river that did not support cottonwoods, which are a phenomenon of the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cottonwoods were so scarce that the presence of three trees in Tres Alamos Wash north of Benson served as a navigation landmark for stage drivers. In the 1880s, Charleston's environs resembled modern-day Sonoita: grassland.



*(Top) Leaders Richard Bauer and John Rose (left-most people) with walk attendees. (Bottom) Tom Leskiw at ruined adobe wall. © Sue Leskiw.*

It is a myth that riverboats were able to ply the San Pedro. Many small dams were built across the river, causing water wars among cattle ranchers. In 1897, a dam built by Colonel William Green was blown up. Unaware that the river's flow had changed, the Colonel's daughter and a friend were drowned. Green, who had a history of altercation with Burnett, believed the Justice was responsible. He went into Tombstone and shot and killed Burnett; however, a jury found him not guilty because he was well liked (and Burnett was not).

In 1882, Charleston's official population was 423 (probably undercounted), larger than Bisbee. But after Tombstone's silver mines flooded in 1886, the mills had to shut down. A large earthquake the following year destroyed the town's adobe buildings and after a mere decade of existence, Charleston was abandoned in 1888.



## SPRNCA Images Grace Benson Overpass

The Spring 2012 issue of *River Roundup* included an article about how the Arizona Department of Transportation planned to incorporate tile images by photographer Bob Herrmann into its I-10 overpass project near Benson. Eight images taken along the San Pedro were selected for inclusion in the project, to be completed in early 2013. The above photo shows a portion of the result. (Photo © Robert Weissler.)

## Sierra Club Addresses Night-time Lighting of San Pedro

By Margaret Case

During last year's monsoon, members of the Sierra Club Borderlands Team visited SPRNCA and did volunteer work in weed removal near San Pedro House before heading out for a walk along the river.

Team members also visited SPRNCA in the Palominas area. They witnessed the high-voltage, "stadium-style" lighting that the Border Patrol has erected at the river, to light up the area at night. The floodlights are on both sides of the river, in the floodplain, at the point where the border fence intersects the river. The lights shine straight down at the river and are positioned to illuminate the entire area.

Concerned about the brunt of such lighting on this valuable wildlife habitat, Borderlands Team members have been working with others (such as the Sky Island Alliance and Center for Biological Diversity) in an effort to get the lights removed or, at least, to achieve some mitigation of their negative impact. Discussions with BLM and the Border Patrol are ongoing.

The Border Patrol uses Normandy-style barriers at the San Pedro River, rather than the taller and more solid barricades used in other places. The more-substantial walls elsewhere push the movement of larger mammals toward those crossings with Normandy-style barriers, so our river offers a precious opportunity for north-south movement by larger mammals. Unnatural

illumination of this dark area is an impediment to the movement of nocturnal wildlife. Abnormal interruption of the night's darkness can also have a disorienting effect on smaller wildlife, including birds and insects.

Dan Millis, with the Sierra Club Borderlands Campaign, states that "the noise and light pollution created by these fossil-fuel powered floodlights are going to be just as much of a barrier to wildlife as the wall itself. There are a variety of less-obtrusive technologies such as night-vision and radar that would better serve the purposes of both the Border Patrol and the National Conservation Area."

For more information, go to <http://arizona.sierraclub.org/conservation/border/>



*Floodlight apparatus along the San Pedro.  
© Jenny Neeley, Sky Island Alliance.*



Barn Swallow on nest attached to side of San Pedro House



Barn Swallow at San Pedro House

## San Pedro House Is Their Nursery: Barn Swallows

*By Gerald R. Noonan, PhD*

Visitors to San Pedro House often enjoy seeing Barn Swallows dashing and wheeling through the air. People also can watch these birds building their nests and feeding their young on the walls of the San Pedro House beneath the roof overhang.

Barn Swallows occur throughout much of the Northern Hemisphere. In North America, they breed from southern Alaska and Canada southward to southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, northern Florida, states along the Gulf, and south to central Mexico. Most of the North American birds overwinter in Central and South America, but a few spend the winter in the extreme southern United States.

Most Barn Swallows return to Arizona in March and April, occasionally even earlier. The numbers of returning birds in Arizona peak from mid-April through mid-May, with stragglers arriving as late as early June. Pair formation and nesting activity begins soon after the birds return to their breeding localities. Approximately half of the first clutches are laid in nests built in prior years. The peak nesting period in Arizona is from approximately mid-May through early June, although they sometimes construct nests as late as the middle of July, and in southeastern Arizona, nesting activity may continue well into September. Fall migration from Arizona usually begins in mid-July and steadily increases and reaches maximum numbers in late September through mid-October. During the fall migration, thousands or more of birds may aggregate and forage over irrigated agricultural fields and open water. The numbers of migrants from Arizona diminish through November, but stragglers sometimes leave as late as December.

During the summer, these birds are common across much of North America. They occur in open or semi-open land such as farms, fields, marshes, and near lakes or other water. People often notice them skimming low over the countryside to feed on a wide variety of flying insects, including flies, beetles, wasps, bees, winged ants, and true bugs. These birds also eat moths, damselflies, grasshoppers, other insects, and occasionally feed on spiders and snails. Rarely, they feed on a few berries or seeds. They mostly capture and eat their food while in flight.

These birds once nested in caves or overhanging cliffs. They have adapted well to humans and now build their nests mostly on human structures such as open buildings, beneath the eaves of structures, and the undersides of bridges or docks. Both sexes build the nest, consisting of a cup of mud and dried grass lined with feathers. In arid Arizona landscapes, the availability of mud for nests is a limiting factor for these birds. Barn Swallows frequently visit the banks of the San Pedro River to obtain mud for their nests.

The female typically lays 4 to 5 eggs but sometimes as many as 7. The eggs are white and spotted with brown. Both sexes incubate the eggs for approximately 13 to 17 days and then feed the young. The young leave the nest about 18 to 23 days after hatching. The parents lead the young back to the nest to sleep for several days after fledging. They continue to feed the young for several days to a week after fledging.



Female House Finch usurping Barn Swallow nest at San Pedro House

They continue to feed the young for several days to a week after fledging. Family groups break up entirely about 2 weeks after the young leave the nest. There are 1 or 2 broods per year. At the San Pedro House, House Finches sometimes takeover nests made by the Barn Swallows, and fights between the birds may occur.

**Recognition.** This is our most graceful-appearing swallow. It has long, pointed wings. Members of this species are easily recognized by the long, deeply forked tail; bluish-black upper parts; and rust or buff-colored underparts. The upper side is blue-black, while the underside is whitish to orange. Length, 6.75 inches; wingspread, 15 inches. The throat has a dark rufous color. Males and females are similar in appearance, but females are often duller in color.

For more articles about the birds of SPRNCA, visit <http://sciencequest.webplus.net/Birds%20of%20SPRNCA.html>.

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## Hummingbird Banding at SPRNCA

*By Tom Wood*

The Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO) completed its 17th year of hummingbird banding on the San Pedro River in 2012. We banded 519 birds of 8 species at 2 different sites. We also recaptured an even 100 birds at least once during the season. The 20% recapture rate is consistent over the many years of the study and, while it is always exciting to catch a new bird (particularly a rarely encountered species), the real value of a banding study comes with these recaptures. Over the years, we have documented with our banding:

- The oldest-known Black-chinned Hummingbird. A bird recaptured 9 years after originally banded as an adult, making her at least 10 years old. She was recaptured several times in the interim.
- Confirmation that Black-chinned Hummingbirds can nest at least twice a year on the River, once in the spring and again with the summer rains.
- Confirmation that Violet-crowned Hummingbirds nest on the San Pedro.
- A Black-chinned Hummingbird banded on the River in 2000 was recaptured by a banding team in Montana in 2009.
- A large influx of Broad-tailed and Broad-billed Hummingbirds on the River following the Monument fire in the Huachucas showed the importance of the San Pedro as a refuge for mountain species following a fire or other disturbance.
- Pollen samples collected from birds will help identify important flowers and foraging areas.
- Banding data monitored the effects of drought, severe storms, and long-term trends.

Other questions remain to be answered, but only by conducting a long-term study like the one SABO is doing can we begin to understand these fascinating creatures. The banding sessions, generally held on Saturday afternoons, have been attended by over 1000 visitors, local and international. The sessions allowed the public to see hummingbirds and research up close. We view the public education aspect as an important part of the project. We are very appreciative of the efforts of the BLM, Friends of

the San Pedro, Laura Mackin, and San Pedro House site hosts, as well as SABO volunteers, to help make this one of the longest-running hummingbird research projects in the country.

The 2013 season has begun. Check the website at [www.sabo.org](http://www.sabo.org) or the San Pedro House for dates and times. We hope to see you there.

## Events Calendar, April-June

[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

- ☛ 8 AM—April 6, 13, 20, 27
- ☛ 8 AM—May 4, 11, 18, 25
- ☛ 8 AM—June 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

### **FSPR Bird Walks**

Second Wednesday & Fourth Saturday at SPH

- ☛ 7 AM—April 17 (Wed); April 27 (Sat)
- ☛ 7 AM—May 8 (Wed); May 25 (Sat)
- ☛ 7 AM—June 12 (Wed); June 22 (Sat)

### **FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks**

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park (EOP)

- ☛ 7 AM—April 7, 14, 21, 28
- ☛ 7 AM—May 5, 12, 19, 26
- ☛ 7 AM—June 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

### **Special Events**

- ☛ Apr 6 (Sat), 8 AM—Members-only Walk to Boston Mill
- ☛ Apr 13-14 (Sat/Sun)—Film Festival in Sierra Vista/Bisbee (see p. 1)
- ☛ Apr 20 (Sat), 8 AM—Millville History Walk
- ☛ May 4 (Sat), 7 AM-5 PM—Spring Festival at San Pedro House (see p. 3)
- ☛ May 11 (Sat), 8 AM—Lewis Springs Hike
- ☛ May 18 (Sat), 8 AM—Fairbank History Walk

☛ June 8 (Sat), 7 AM—St David Bird Walk at Holy Trinity Monastery

☛ June 15 (Sat), 8 AM—Murray Springs History Walk

## **New & Renewing Members, December 2012-February 2013**

April Alvarez-Corona & Tasha Stuart, Janice Anderson, Richard Bauer, Mark Blosser, Mary Bonds, John Broz, James Cook, Andrew & Elizabeth Fournier, Sully & Carole Frumenti, Sheila Gershen & Sy Baldwin, Vance & Lisa Haynes, Dave Heck, Bob Herrmann, Kathy Holland, Edward & Judy Johnson, James & Robin Keiser, Rosemary King, Sharon & Lee Luker, Carl & Leslie McCourt, Jonathan & Darlene Melk, Marie Pinto & Robert Willis, Ron Pulliam, Judy Reis, Angela Rutherford, Paul & Sherry Seaman, Ruthann & Joe Sitter, Doug & Denise Snow, Renell & Ron Stewart, Connie Walcott, Leah Ward & Anne Bullock, Robert & Kathleen White, Ted White

## **Contact List**

- President—Ron Serviss
- Directors—Tom Clancy, Steve Ogle, 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](mailto:fspr@sanpedroriver.org) or [sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org) or [fsprdiretor@sanpedroriver.org](mailto:fsprdiretor@sanpedroriver.org). Mailing address: 1763 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635; Fax: 520-459-7334 Website: [www.sanpedroriver.org](http://www.sanpedroriver.org)

***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.***