



Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

Summer 2012

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Executive Director's Report

By Robert Weissler

FSPR conducted its first mid-year donor appeal this summer. So far, we have received 23 responses totaling over \$1400 (see page 7). We are planning a film festival in Bisbee (see page 2), to take place in December, that will offer another fundraising opportunity, not to mention our end-of-year appeal. The Conservation Lands Foundation has presented several webinars on various fundraising topics and continues to advise FSPR in how to manage these efforts.

FSPR had a strong presence at Southwest Wings Birding and Nature Festival with the tireless efforts of our bookstore manager Laura Mackin (see page 3). FSPR also had a booth at Movies in the Park event in July, an event sponsored by the Cochise Water Project and Water Wise. The event was attended by families with kids in tow, most of whom were unaware of FSPR, so we reached out to a new audience.

At the end of May, we submitted a grant application to Cochise Community Foundation to produce a youth-oriented video on the function of cottonwoods in the riparian ecosystem and its effect on reducing evapotranspiration of the river's water. We were recently informed that our grant application was approved for funding, so we are excited to embark on yet another video production effort later this year.

FSPR was well-represented at several USPP meetings in which studies were presented on an estimate of new wells in the basin and on

the potential for infiltration at several sites including Riverstone to reduce the rate of overdraft of the regional aquifer.

We look forward to attending events including the Conservation Lands Foundation Rendezvous in Grand Junction, Colorado during autumn. Our efforts to secure additional grants continue with United Way and other funding sources. Meanwhile, we are executing on grants from BLM to support educational videos for youth and to train our Board of Directors to pursue advocacy, fundraising, and other capacity-building activities.

If you are looking for volunteer opportunities with FSPR, we have a wide variety, from bookstore volunteers, docents to guide walks, extra hands to help with cleanup events, and insightful writers to inform the public through newspaper and newsletter articles, blogs, or whatever medium is appropriate. For the most-dedicated friends of our organization, we have several positions on the board we are looking to fill. Your energy and commitment will help FSPR stretch to achieve new goals!

Fall Cultural Docent Training

By Ron Serviss

FSPR has two different docent programs. First, there is the Natural Docent Program that is responsible for leading interpretive and birding walks along the river. Training for this program is held in the spring. Second, there is a Cultural Docent Program that leads history walks to the Murray Springs Clovis Site, Terrenate Spanish

Presidio, Millville Silver Mill ruins, and the ghost town of Fairbank. Walks are held monthly on a Saturday morning and rotate between the four locations. Training for this program is held in the fall. FSPR is accepting enrollment for those who would like to join our Cultural Docent Team.

The training consists of five Thursday night lectures held at the BLM offices and four Saturday morning walks to the four locations mentioned. There is a \$25 charge to cover materials, which can be refunded upon your participation as a docent. The training dates have not been finalized, but should occur in late October/early November.

For more information or to reserve a space, contact me at serviss.ron@gmail.com or call 520-432-6773.



Film Festival December 9

By Ron Serviss

In the last newsletter, we reported that FSPR had been selected as one of the national hosts for the Wild and Scenic Places Film Festival. We can now report we have a place and date.

The event will be held at the newly refurbished Theater Royale in Old Bisbee on the afternoon of Sunday, December 9, 2012. If there is a need for a second show, it will be that evening.

More information will follow, but there are two things to note for now. First, mark the date on your calendar and come make a day of it in Bisbee. Visit the galleries, do some holiday shopping, and enjoy one of the restaurants.

Second, we will need lots of volunteers to make this event a success. There will be several information tables, programs to hand out, tickets to collect, raffle tickets to sell, etc. To sign up, email fsprdirector@sanpedroriver.org.

New Spirit in Our Ghost Town

By Ron Stewart

If you have not visited Fairbank recently, I encourage you to drop by to see the changes.

In the schoolhouse, we are working to improve the displays, broadening the information presented to better address the total spectrum of cultural resources in SPRNCA. Eventually, this will result in updated displays that describe the history of the town, the railroads, a cultural overview, and famous people and events.

The first concrete step taken has resulted in a new display of prehistoric artifacts in the side room of the schoolhouse. Jim Peterson and I, both cultural docents, have worked with Chris Schraeger, the BLM archeologist, to pull together artifacts that are exhibited in two new display cases with a timeline of the history of the middle San Pedro valley as a backdrop. Information about the Presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate remains in the room, enhanced by a beautiful, new calligraphy sign created by docent Gabrielle Lafargue.

We are hoping to improve the historic material in the main room and have taken steps in that direction. The display cases there have been reorganized and relabeled and many new items have been added. New emphasis is being placed on the schoolhouse, to include a notebook that describes the schoolhouse restoration project. We hope to put more emphasis on the railroading activity that was the reason for Fairbank's existence and have added a railroad freight register similar to what was used at the Mercantile. I was lucky enough to locate one of the original school desks, which will be displayed. This wonderful artifact belongs to Nancy Sosa, the Tombstone archivist, who has family connections to the town.

I am in the process of researching Fairbank. Review of historic newspapers has provided new insights and a display of "Fairbank News," generally amusing or of important events, from the 1890s and early 1900s has been added to the bulletin board in the schoolhouse. I plan to contact the "Fairbank reunion" group for stories, photographs, or items to be borrowed for display. If anyone has information or leads that would help us with our efforts, please contact me at ronscyberlounge@me.com.



Boquillas Ranch Headquarters. Photo by Ron Stewart

Outside, the BLM has done a great job of stabilizing the CCC-era outhouse and stable. They are looking to take similar action with the house across from the school. The hurricane fence has been removed from around the Mercantile building and replaced with a shorter fence that resembles what was there historically. A large “Schoolhouse Open” sign has been added at the entrance to the town site (turned over when the schoolhouse is not open). Anecdotally, this simple device has increased visitation. The cemetery area has once again been repaired to cover over “social trails” cut up the slope, which are dangerous to walk on and will lead to further erosion of the graves.

We are planning a tour of the Boquillas Ranch headquarters two miles south of Fairbank this winter, so watch for that opportunity to learn more about the history of this interesting site.

Working a shift at Fairbank (Friday, Saturday, or Sunday 9:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. or 1:00-4:30 p.m.) is a great way to support the Friends and meet interesting visitors. Sally Rosén manages the schoolhouse for the Friends; she will be glad to sign you up at schoolhouse@sanpedroriver.org. Otherwise, I heartily recommend that you come out for a hike and stop by the schoolhouse to see the initial results of our efforts to breathe some new spirit into the old town.

Monthly Hike Suggestions

By Ron Serviss

FSPR conducts a wide variety of docent-led walks throughout the year. These include interpretive, birding, cultural history, and occasional member-only walks to select places.

In the past, we have also led monthly longer hikes to special places folks seldom get to visit, such as Little Boquillas Ranch/Boston Mill, the St. David Cienega, and Lewis Springs. Unfortunately, despite their popularity, these hikes got away from us last year. We now want to put some new energy into the program and get them rescheduled for next year.

So how about you? Do you have a favorite hike in SPRNCA that you would like to see included on the list? Hikes need to have a fairly accessible starting point, an identifiable destination, require a minimal amount (if any) of bushwhacking, and be of a reasonable length for the average hiker (5-7 miles roundtrip). We would love to hear your ideas. Contact fsprdirector@sanpedroriver.org or leave a message at the office at 520-459-2555.

Southwest Wings Recap

By Laura Mackin

Southwest Wings (SWW) Birding & Nature Festival — held for 21 years in Cochise County — is Arizona’s oldest birding festival. After moving the event to Cochise College last year, festival organizers saw an increase in the number of organizations and agencies wanting to participate. Vendors and exhibitors were split between the library lobby and the adjacent Student Union building. The San Pedro House booth was located in the same space we had last year and saw lots of foot traffic and sales.

In addition to the popular field trips (which quickly filled up), the festival had over 50 free programs open to everyone with a wide variety of topics. This year saw the addition of children’s programs to specifically attract younger kids and introduce them to birding and nature. Each year, the festival gets bigger and better. Cochise College is the perfect venue for this event. The live animal exhibits were divided between the two buildings, so that each location had live birds and reptiles, plus exhibitors and vendors.

If you would like to get involved, either as a volunteer or SWW board member, contact Gordon Lewis at 520-366-5560 or ranhogulag@gmail.com.



Top: Some of the Sierra Club Borderlands Team members. Middle: Jill Holslin. Right: Dan Millis. Photos by Italia Millan.

Thank You, Sierra Club

By Ron Serviss

We all know what happens to our vegetation, both wanted and unwanted, during the monsoon season. The area around San Pedro House is no exception; it can quickly turn into the setting for an old Tarzan movie. It can be quite a challenge for our gardening volunteers to keep up with.

Fortunately for us, on August 18, a group of 12 volunteers from the Tucson (and beyond) Sierra Club joined Ted Mouras to do some much-needed weeding. After several hours of strenuous yanking and raking, they were treated to a walk along the river. We are sincerely grateful for their efforts.

If you enjoy gardening and would like to help out with the San Pedro House gardens, please contact tedmouras@mindspring.com.



For the Birds

By Heather Swanson

“That’s for the birds.” I’m sure we’ve all heard this saying when someone thinks that something is meaningless, but that is not why I say it. I say it because, in my world, it is definitely for the birds, and it has substantial meaning!

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) is an extremely important habitat for birds. More than 100 species of breeding birds and over 250 species of migrant and wintering birds have been documented within SPRNCA. Five to 10 million birds use the San Pedro River annually for migration and breeding. To attest to its importance, the American Bird Conservancy designated the San Pedro as the first Globally Important Bird Area in North America in 1996 and more recently, National Audubon Society designated it a Globally Important Bird Area.

It is obvious that this area is important to birds, but birds are also important to the area. Birds pollinate flowers; they spread and fertilize seeds; they eat billions of insects, amphibians, rodents, and reptiles; and they help the local economy by bringing in bird lovers from all over the world! Since SPRNCA’s designation in 1988, BLM has made it a priority to make sure that the avian species that utilize and contribute to this area are protected. The basis of protecting a resource is monitoring, and one way to monitor avian species is through banding.

Bird banding is a way for scientists to track and, in a way, observe a bird's life. Individual birds are captured using specialized nets called mist nets. Each captured bird is identified; its age, sex, and breeding status determined; and the bird is banded. An aluminum band with a unique set of numbers stamped on it, provided by the U.S. Geological Survey Bird Banding Laboratory, is placed on the bird's leg. The bird is then released. The whole process takes approximately two minutes. This bird, along with all the other birds throughout the world that have been banded, can now be tracked.

Information such as lifespan, how far and where the bird travels, and increases and declines in populations can be discovered from analyzing banding data. Researchers can see how long migrants stay in an area, observe the general health of resident species (which reflects general ecosystem health), see which species are molting in conjunction with climate change or resource availability, and note the percentage of breeding adults and juveniles in the population. The information learned from banding plays a major role in management actions and the continued preservation of important areas like SPRNCA.

Recent analysis of key avian species within SPRNCA shows high site fidelity. The return of hundreds of individuals to SPRNCA year after year is dramatic. The number of birds that



*Heather Swanson shows a newly banded Lesser Goldfinch to a young visitor, Zoe Miller.
Photo courtesy of Alice Wilcox*

survive here for years is also dramatic. High year is dramatic. The number of birds that site fidelity confirms the extreme importance of this worthy resource and adds to the already profound amount of data that says that SPRNCA needs to continue to be protected.

There are currently two banding stations being operated in SPRNCA, with FSPR volunteers assisting the BLM Natural Resource Specialist. One of these stations, located at San Pedro House, is operated from the beginning of March through April and then from August through November. The other station, located by Green Kingfisher Pond, is operated from May through July.

The Green Kingfisher Pond station is one of more than 500 that make up the Monitoring Avian Productivity and Survivorship (MAPS) program. This program was initiated by the Institute for Bird Populations (IBP) in 1989 to gather data on North American land birds for the purpose of management and conservation. Data gathered at these two stations are entered into two nationwide databases, one maintained by IBP and the other by the USGS Bird Banding Laboratory.

Hummingbird banding is also conducted at San Pedro House by the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO), from July through September. The public is welcome, so contact SABO or FSPR for days and times (see Calendar, page 7).

If you would like to learn more about banding or the wonderful birds in our area, call me at 520-439-6400. Visitors are welcome at the banding stations to observe, ask questions, participate, and see exactly why I do what I do, just for the birds.

This article is based on a story published in 2008 in the Sierra Vista Herald.

Heather Swanson is a Natural Resource Specialist for the BLM's San Pedro Project Office in Sierra Vista. She is a native Arizonan raised in Benson. Heather received her degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from the University of Arizona in 2007. Her passion for birds was realized the first time she observed a Vermilion Flycatcher mock fighting at her bedroom window. Heather lives in St. David with her daughter, five dogs, three horses, and a cat.



Pomerene Dam. Photo by Sandy Kunzer.

Dam Story

By Sandy Kunzer

As a self-proclaimed “Dam Doctor,” I can assure those of you who are uncertain that the structure pictured above IS a dam. The picture shows a view over the dam looking upstream to the south and was taken by me at a little before noon on August 6, 2012. The dam sits astride the San Pedro River, giving lie to the local myth, sustained by all local environmental organizations, that our river is “undammed” and/or “free flowing.” The structure — known as the Pomerene Dam — is constructed of concrete with embedded steel and wood and lies about 0.8 miles north of the Highway 80 bridge over the San Pedro just west of the town of St. David. There is no public access, since the dam is on private land that is posted against trespass.

This structure was completed in April 1934, but was preceded by a similar structure in the same vicinity that was apparently finished in 1927 but washed out in August 1931. The purpose of each dam was to divert water from the San Pedro into an irrigation canal, providing water to farmers and ranchers to the north. No such function currently takes place and the supporting water company has been disbanded, leaving this relict of the past continuing to change the hydrology, geomorphology, and ecology of our river.

Erratum: The photo of a water truck on page 5 of the Spring 2012 River Roundup was incorrectly credited to Dutch Nagle. The picture was taken by Mike Foster.

Car Donations to the Friends

By Robert Weissler

Are you considering selling an old vehicle? There are more options to consider than you might have thought. You might have heard of car donation charities. So had I. However, it wasn't until my wife and I were looking to replace our 11+-year-old car that it occurred to us that it might be a useful way to recycle our old vehicle. We engaged Cars 4 Causes www.cars4causes.net

Selling a used vehicle is fraught with problems, especially if someone offers you cash and you are wondering where the car ultimately will end up... like the police blotter. Of course, if you fill out the required ADOT forms, you are off the hook as far as liability is concerned post-sale.

One advantage of car charities is that most offer local towing at no cost, something that is particularly helpful if the vehicle is not operational. Such charities also offer a convenient way to get a significant tax deduction. But have you thought about the other end of your donation? Neither had I.

Then, Friends of the San Pedro River popped into my head! I could specify that the proceeds benefit the Friends. What could be easier?

So, if your vehicle is getting on in years and you're wondering whether to invest further in repairs or to buy a new one, please keep FSPR in mind! Your donation can benefit you during tax time and can benefit the River as well.

New & Renewing Members, June-August

Anders Aman; Terence Berger; Bob Blanchard; Bonnie Bosworth; Earl & Rowena Bradshaw; Margaret & Bill Case; Clay & Sue Cook; Joel Fago; Uda & Charles Gordon; William Graham; Ann Hartfiel; Jim & Karen Havlena; Patrick & Barbara Ledger; Richard & Debbie Lesko; Patrick McGowan; Linda Mickley & Kurt Miller; Teresa & Ruben Miranda; Anne Morris & David Steed; Todd & Catherine Newell; Gary Noonan; Joseph Parker & Shannon Harlow; Jim Peterson; Doug & Arlene Ripley; Karl & Mary Schneider; Barbara & Geoffrey Stearns; Bob & Jane Strain; Francis Ugolini & Lorraine Mulia; Leslie Uhr & Brit Rosso; Erika Wilson; Gene Zastera

Events Calendar, September-December

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

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

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

Understanding the River Interpretive Walks

Every Saturday at SPH

- ☛ 8 AM — September 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
- ☛ 9 AM (note new start time) — October 6, 13, 20, 27
- ☛ 9 AM — November 3, 10, 17, 24
- ☛ 9 AM — December 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

FSPR Bird Walks

Second Wednesday & Fourth Saturday at SPH

- ☛ 7 AM — September 12 (Wed); September 22 (Sat)
- ☛ 8 AM (note new start time) — October 10 (Wed); October 27 (Sat)
- ☛ 8 AM — November 14 (Wed); November 24 (Sat)
- ☛ 8AM — December 12 (Wed); December 22 (Sat)

FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park

- ☛ 7 AM — September 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
- ☛ 8 AM (note new start time) — October 7, 14, 21, 28
- ☛ 8 AM — November 4, 11, 18, 25
- ☛ 8 AM — December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

Special Events

- ☛ September 15 (Sat), 8 AM — Terrenate History Walk
- ☛ Oct 6 (Sat), TBD — Fairbank Reunion
- ☛ October 20 (Sat), 9 AM — Murray Springs History Walk
- ☛ October 20 (Sat), 9 AM — Clanton Ranch Walk with Bette Ford (Helldorado Days)
- ☛ November 17 (Sat), 9 AM — Millville History Walk

Thanks for Your Mid-year Contributions!

We sincerely thank the “friends” of the San Pedro River who stepped up to the challenge of our Summer Appeal and the Conservation Lands Foundation \$10K Match: Cynthia Adams, Bettina & Robert Arrigoni, Joan & John Black, Jane Chambers, Henry (Steve) Conroy, Clayton & Susan Cook, Bette & Dan Ford, Tricia Gerrodette, Betty & Bob Goble, Ken Gray, Martha Irvine, Teresa Jurek, Peter Kelly, Sandra Kousek, Sue & Tom Leskiw, DeForest & Cecelia Lewis, Kent & Inga McCord, Melanie & Ted Mouras, Al & Dee Puff, Holly Richter, Doug & Arlene Ripley, John Rose, Doug & Denise Snow, Jane & Robert Strain, Mary Beth Sutor, Paul & Arlene Van Belle, Wayne & Donna Viitanen, Kathleen & Robert White.



Contact List

- President — Ron Serviss
- Directors — Tom Clancy, Sally Rosén, Renell Stewart, Ron Stewart
- 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
- Office 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 or fsprdiretor@sanpedroriver.org.
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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.