



Friends of the San Pedro River Roundup

Summer 2013

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Executive Director's Report

By Robert Weissler

The CLF Board approved our Year 2 proposal and awarded a grant that started May 1. The Year 2 Constituency Development Program grant agreement includes the grant request containing a statement of work that is very aggressive and will challenge the organization. Meanwhile, the Cochise Community Foundation (CCF) invited FSPR to submit a full grant application for a proposal to develop and print a SPRNCA Trail Guide. We submitted a proposal at the end of May. Grant applications for the next CCF cycle will be reviewed over the summer, with grants awarded in September.

FSPR volunteers staffed tables at the Water Expo at the Sierra Vista Mall, at Earth Day at the Sierra Vista Farmers' Market, at STEM Day at Cochise College, and at the Tucson Water Festival/Earth Day back in April, then at Ft. Huachuca Safety Day in May.

On May 25, Audubon Arizona and Audubon's Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN) hosted the workshop "Protecting Our Rivers" in Tucson. It provided an overview of WRAN's goals, then identified challenges facing western rivers and riparian habitats, the priorities among them, and opportunities for the network to engage on certain issues. After lunch, Arizona state legislators Steve Farley (D) and Ethan Orr (R) shared with the group how to get an issue on their agenda and how best to reach them to request a specific action. This was perhaps the most useful part of the workshop. The workshop concluded with how to conduct effective advocacy. The SPRNCA Resource Management Program (RMP) is high on WRAN's list of priorities (see article below and continued on p. 2).

Attend Scoping Meetings for SPRNCA Resource Management Plan

By Robert Weissler

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has conducted several public engagement strategy meetings in Sierra Vista, Benson, and Tucson during the scoping period for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) Resource Management Plan (RMP). These meetings provided an opportunity for participants to share their ideas on how they would like to be involved in the RMP planning process. Subsequently, BLM has scheduled educational forums in July and August as the scoping process proceeds. BLM and FSPR encourage the public to get involved in the development of the RMP and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for SPRNCA.

“Those who attended the May 15 public engagement strategy meeting in Sierra Vista indicated that they wanted more meetings to learn about the process for getting involved in the RMP,” said BLM’s Tucson Field Manager Brian Bellew. “We’ve changed our schedule to provide time for everyone to learn more about the basic planning process and the resources of the San Pedro so that they can truly contribute to plan development.”

Additional meetings are set for Saturdays in July and August. ***FSPR wants to ensure a strong turnout of its conservation-minded members!*** Four Education and Scoping Forums will be held from 9 am to noon:

- ☛ July 20 Focus: Water and Riparian, Cochise College in Sierra Vista
- ☛ July 27 Focus: Watershed and Range, University of Arizona (UA) South in Sierra Vista
- ☛ August 10 Focus: Wildlife and Threatened & Endangered Species, UA South
- ☛ August 17 Focus: Cultural Resources and Recreation, UA South

A fifth forum, along with scoping on socio-economic issues, will be scheduled later in August. After the education and scoping forums are completed, there will be one more scoping meeting held at each location from 6-8:30 pm:

- ☛ August 13 Benson Fire Station, 375 E 7th Street
- ☛ August 15 Tucson (Location TBD)
- ☛ August 21 Sierra Vista, UA South

Written scoping comments will be accepted at all of the meetings listed above. The focus is on “substantive comments” that propose a particular set of management alternatives for consideration by BLM staff. In order for comments to be substantive, avoid accusations or value judgments and stick to simple, direct statements like “I encourage BLM to continue to prohibit off-road motor vehicle use, especially in the river channel itself or anywhere that is not on designated, paved roads and highways in SPRNCA.” Other alternatives that our members likely want to emphasize are prohibitions on removing artifacts and restrictions on use of firearms, particularly in heavily visited places like San Pedro House and Fairbank Schoolhouse and in sensitive prehistoric and historic sites like Murray Springs and Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate. And certainly we want to promote protection of the cottonwood/willow gallery forest, mesquite bosques, and other sensitive riparian habitats essential to birds and other wildlife, not to mention restoration of upland grasslands.

BLM will accept comments throughout the planning effort. Comments can be submitted on issues and planning criteria related to the RMP/EIS by any of the following methods:

Email: blm_az_tfo_sprnca_rmp@blm.gov

Fax: 520-258-7238

Mail: Amy Markstein, BLM Tucson Field Office, 3201 E Universal Way, Tucson AZ 85756

[NOTE: Before including your address, phone number, email address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask BLM in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, BLM cannot guarantee that it will be able to do so.]

The initiation of the RMP began with the April 30, 2013 publication of the Notice of Intent (NOI) in the Federal Register. The scoping period will conclude on September 30, 2013, with work beginning on development of alternatives after that. Development of the RMP/EIS is expected to take at least a year. When completed and a Record of Decision (ROD) is signed, this RMP will set management guidelines for the SPRNCA for the next 15+ years.

FSPR Initiates Monthly Lecture Series; Next Talk July 18

By Robert Weissler

Ron Stewart has organized a monthly series of Thursday evening lectures on a wide variety of cultural and natural history topics. Although one purpose of these lectures is to provide training for our docents and volunteers, we hope these talks will be of general interest to our members and the public at large.

Rebecca Orozco presented the first lecture in April on “La Frontera: A Brief History of the Cochise County Borderlands.” She covered the Spanish and Mexican periods of Cochise County history, including the Presidio and other early Hispanic and Native American sites in SPRNCA. Tom Wood gave the May lecture on bird migration, entitled “Migration: Taking the Pulse of the Planet.” Tom recounted some amazing stories of migration, many with an Arizona connection, including the importance of the San Pedro River as a migration corridor. In June, Ron Stewart spoke about “Mexican Land Grants of Southeast Arizona.” His talk explored one of the little-known aspects of our local history that shapes our affairs even in the present day (see related article, p. 13-15).

The next lecture will be given on Thursday, July 18. Sarah Luna of SP Consultants and Sarah Porter, executive director of Audubon Arizona, will enlighten us about Audubon’s Western Rivers Action Network (WRAN). This presentation will cover the network’s mission and short-term policy priorities, including BLM’s Resource Management Plan (RMP) for SPRNCA, funding for the Farm Bill and other USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation land management assistance programs, and state legislation, namely; HB2338, a bill that would create Regional Water Augmentation Authorities (RWAAs).

The August 15 lecture will feature Ed Riggs on “Tombstone 1881: A Sampling of Rogues, a Glorification of Thugs.” Riggs is a noted Cochise County historian and president of the Sierra Vista Historical Society. His lecture will describe the early days of Tombstone and its colorful characters. The early San Pedro River towns were part of this world: understanding Tombstone is essential to understanding the river.

Lectures take place at 7 pm on the third Thursday of each month at the Sun Canyon Inn, located at 260 N. Garden Avenue near the main entrance to Ft. Huachuca in Sierra Vista.



Heather Swanson, BLM natural resource specialist, and Tice Supplee, Arizona Audubon director of bird conservation, display the original 1996 IBA plaque and the new 2013 version. Photos by Diane Drobka, BLM.

SPRNCA Rededicated as Globally Important Bird Area

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) in southeastern Arizona has long been known as a premier birding location. On Saturday, May 4, that status was highlighted during the 8th annual International Migratory Bird Day celebration at the San Pedro House east of Sierra Vista.

Arizona Audubon, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Sonoran Joint Venture, and Arizona Game and Fish Department joined together to re-dedicate SPRNCA as a Globally Important Bird Area (IBA). This 57,000-acre NCA, with 40 miles of the San Pedro River as its heart, supports nearly 400 migrant and nesting avian species.

Many partners joined Audubon and the BLM to gather data needed to reaffirm the NCA's importance. Volunteers from Huachuca Audubon Society, Tucson Audubon Society, Friends of the San Pedro River, Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory, San Pedro Avian Resources Center, and other organizations and individuals documented key species and populations that earned the NCA this distinction.

The birds that qualified the site as globally important are Arizona Bell's Vireo, Western Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Gray Hawk, Lucy's Warbler, and Abert's Towhee, plus the diversity and numbers of neotropical migrants, primarily warblers. This riparian corridor of cottonwoods, willows, and other native species provides a critical migration corridor between countries in Central and South America and sites in the northern US and Canada.

"The BLM is committed to ensuring that the avian habitats supported by the San Pedro River continue to flourish," said Kathy Pedrick, BLM Acting Gila District Manager. "We and our partners know that we must conserve, protect, and enhance this special place for future generations."

The San Pedro was originally recognized by the American Bird Conservancy in 1996 as the first Globally Important Bird Area in North America. In 2000, Audubon was designated by BirdLife International as its new US IBA partner and is now the lead on this program. Audubon has reconfirmed the San Pedro's global status.



(From left) Elaine Moore (Huachuca Audubon Society), Tice Supplee (Arizona Audubon), Kathy Pedrick (BLM), and Heather Swanson (BLM).

Sierra Vista, Prosperity, Water Adequacy & the San Pedro

By Robert Weissler

The fates of Sierra Vista/Ft. Huachuca and the San Pedro River are inextricably linked, as recent events make abundantly clear. Whether that linkage is a positive or a negative is a matter of perspective. For Friends of the San Pedro River, securing the future of the river is a plus for the local community, as it represents a vital resource. However, the City of Sierra Vista and real estate developer Castle and Cooke do not appear to share this perspective.

Last year, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), along with local property owners Robin Silver and Tricia Gerrodette, filed an objection, and then an appeal, with the state regarding a certificate of water adequacy issued by the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) for Pueblo del Sol Water Company (PDS). PDS plans to supply water to the proposed Tribute housing development in Sierra Vista. Construction of Tribute would provide nearly 7000 homes plus commercial properties. To serve Tribute, PDS would pump roughly 3300 acre-feet of water per year from the aquifer once the development is completed. That represents a 30% increase over the current annual groundwater deficit.

In an administrative hearing in response to the appeals, ADWR admitted that it did not consider federal water rights for the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) prior to issuing the certificate of an adequate 100-year groundwater supply. Although US Geological Survey scientists testified that pumping for Tribute would lower the river level, the judge wrote that since the pumping was not in the alluvial aquifer directly under the river—and state water law does not recognize a connection between the regional aquifer under Sierra Vista and the river—there was no legal basis to conclude that the pumping would impact the river. Also, the judge added that the SPRNCA federal

reserve water right would be established not by ADWR, but instead by the Gila River Adjudication, a decades-long process still underway. Despite the federal water right not yet being quantified, the judge recommended that there was adequate water for Tribute, albeit without identifying whether that water ultimately would be legally available to PDS.

Since the hearing, BLM filed a lawsuit in the Superior Court of Maricopa County, along with Silver and Gerrodette. With BLM and the federal government engaged in the court appeal of the ADWR decision, the stage is set for the ultimate resolution of the dispute over water rights and adequacy of water supplies for people and for the environment, especially the river. The appeal is likely to be a protracted process; regardless of the outcome, as the losing side likely would appeal to the next higher court.

Meanwhile, the City of Sierra Vista commissioned an economic development study that recently yielded a Plan For Prosperity. While it may not be a shock to learn that the plan labeled environmental activism and the San Pedro River (and retirees?) among threats to prosperity, it certainly is disappointing. After all, to many of us, the canyons of the Sky Islands and the river represent valuable natural resources that singularly brought us to the area and that are central to recreational opportunities and local tourism. Many of us would flip the threats and opportunities of the plan around to label the river as an opportunity and unconstrained real estate development as a threat to the aquifer and the river.

Keeping up with the complex issues surrounding groundwater and the river is a challenge for most of us. Fortunately, the Sierra Vista *Herald* has published a series of articles called "Finding Balance" (www.svherald.com/finding_balance) that covers them well.

If you share our dismay over these recent developments, there are several things you can do. First, you can write letters to the editor of our local papers to weigh in on the Plan For Prosperity. You might also consider joining Audubon's [Western Rivers Action Network](http://www.westernriversactionnetwork.org). The Audubon Arizona news release (www.huachuca-audubon.org/AudubonArizonaChapterNewsletterRelease032013.pdf) has additional information about the network. And finally, show your support for river protection by attending educational forums in July and August in Sierra Vista during the scoping period for the [SPRNCA Resource Management Plan \(RMP\)](#) (see article, p. 1-2).



Water levels in Kingfisher Pond within SPRNCA have changed dramatically over the last few months. Bob Hermann took these photographs that show a filled pond (above) on November 6, 2012 and a dried-up one (right) on June 26, 2013, caused by a combination of drought and silt deposition. The former gravel pit recently refilled with the onset of the monsoon, but likely will not remain a pond in the long term, instead transitioning into a marsh.



I'm a Stomper

By Éva Nagy

How can we in southeastern Arizona not love *Epic*, an animated movie in which tiny leafmen fly around on saddled and bridled hummingbirds? A visual feast, this film takes a refreshing departure from pitching pompous—or, at best, ignorant—humans against benevolent—or, at best, indifferent—nature. Instead, *Epic* shows how delicate the balance is between life and death, health and sickness, awareness and illusion.

Epic starts with a simple statement: the forest usually thrives thanks to its queen, who holds its life and keeps decay in check, but this balance has been upset, and rot and blight advance beyond their boundaries. The queen is a magical creature, a beautiful fairy who looks delicate and ephemeral, yet proves to be tough in battle and strong of will. Her army consists of leafmen; her people: all creatures of the forest, except the usual bad guys such as rodents, amphibians, and icky insects. Sadly, bats are put on the dark side, too, although they only block the moon at a critical moment when moonlight is needed and are easily diverted by an iPod playing bat sounds.

And that's where humans come in. The leafmen encounter a girl shrunk by the queen's magic and endowed with a mission to save the pod (the queen's heir) that will carry on life in the forest. They explain to the girl that in their world, humans are called stompers. They describe one guy who keeps looking for them day in and day out, plodding around on the trails with his huge feet in slo-mo, talking like a record spinning at half-speed. That guy turns out to be the girl's father, who is a proverbial mad scientist out to prove the existence of miniature intelligent life in the woods. He searches and studies and builds contraptions to bridge his large and slow and obvious world to an improbable, infinitesimal, unseen world that's as fast as a hummingbird's heartbeat.

He doesn't try to save anything or anyone, just wants to see, wants to know. His daughter is even farther from being a naturalist: a teenager whose mother died, echoing her belief that dad is crazy and out of touch with reality. Until she is shrunk and entrusted with the life of the forest. Then, she works to save the pod from inside the infinitesimal and unseen, using her father's contraptions to get him on board. Concurrently, the stomper, having studied bat behavior and recorded their sounds, leads them away from the moonlight, which then shines on the pod and life is renewed. Rot and blight retreat.

When I'm walking along the San Pedro River or in the Huachucas, I, too, feel like a stomper. My every step crunches with dry leaves; my backpack drums on branches; the apple crashes between my teeth; if there was any silence, it's all gone with my movements. And I'm also a stomper as I look at a bird through my binoculars, as I lean over to a flower, as I listen to a rustling in the bushes, as I observe damage to a tree.

And I'm a stomper when I tell someone what I saw on the trail, when I share pictures, write a story, think, invite others to experience the life of the water, the trees, the hummingbirds. The life that seems delicate and ephemeral is beautiful, tough, and will go on, with the help of some stomping.

Will you help stomp for the river? Let's tell its story to a wider audience! We need articles, photos, short videos sharing your experiences of our San Pedro. If we have enough material, we can expand the FSPR's online presence through social media and potentially reach hundreds of thousands of people. If you have expertise, creative ideas for online publicity, please let us know!

Locally, we want to reach out to people who may never think to go down to the river. We want to share with everyone in the community its beauty and serenity. Included in our plans are docent-led silent walks for people who may not want to go on a bird walk (this could appeal to busy professionals in need of a recharge); a plein air art festival to engage artists of all ages (perhaps at Fairbank); chamber music concerts under the SPH ramada; healing arts (massage, reiki, etc.) clinic; and wheelchair picnics and/or talks at the SPH. This is just a sampling of what's possible. **If any of these projects resonate with you or have other ideas for bringing people to the river, please let Ron Serviss, Ron Stewart, or Éva Nagy know—we need your input and inspiration! Nothing will happen without your participation—everything can happen with your involvement. Thank you! eva@southernarizonaeditor.com**



(Left) Ron Stewart discusses the history of the Mercantile. (Right) First graders update their Scavenger Hunt forms. Photos by Ron Serviss.

Students at the River

By Ron Serviss

Middle School at Fairbank: On April 25, 120 seventh graders from the Joyce Clark Middle School in Sierra Vista spent the day at the Fairbank Ghost Town. The students were divided into small groups and rotated among a variety of stations, where they learned about the general history of Fairbank, as well as specifics on the one-room school house, the ecology of the area, and participated in games typical of the late 1800s. Thanks to Jane Chambers, Mike Foster, Tess Jurek, Ron Stewart, and Ron Serviss for their help.

First Graders at San Pedro House: Over a 3-day period in mid-May, the entire first grade class from Col. Myers School on Ft. Huachuca visited the San Pedro River. They learned about the ecology of the river in a variety of ways, including a puppet show, a scavenger hunt, walks around Kingfisher Pond, and specimen collection in the river. Thanks to John Rose, Tess Jurek, Tom Wood, and Ron Serviss for volunteering.

Spring Festival at San Pedro House

By Laura Mackin

Spring was celebrated on the river with our annual festival on Saturday, May 4. This is the 8th year that the Spring Festival has been held in conjunction with International Migratory Bird Day. The day began with two bird walks and an interpretive river walk. Over a dozen agencies and organizations set up educational and information booths.

The popular Native Plant Sale began with a presentation by Jan Groth of the Cochise County Master Gardeners on landscaping with native and low-water use plants. The plant sale featured over 250 plants selected by the San Pedro House gardening crew, with most of them selling during the festival.

The Gray Hawk Nature Center exhibit featuring live snakes and reptiles was busy the entire day and the ramada was filled to capacity for Sandy Anderson's "Snakes Alive!" presentation. Cado Daily of WaterWise gave a presentation on building your own rainwater harvesting system.

In the afternoon, BLM and Arizona Audubon held a special ceremony re-dedicating SPRNCA as a Globally Important Bird Area, unveiling a newly installed plaque in front of San Pedro House (see article, p. 3-4).

The Kids' Ramada saw a steady stream of children all day for tattoos, facepainting, and coloring books. We distributed over 60 goodie bags. The nest box building workshop was very popular and continued throughout the day until all 40 kits were built.

Overall, it was a great event, with great weather and great participation.

We would like to thank everyone who came out to participate and all the volunteers who helped make this event possible. The event was sponsored by the Friends of the San Pedro River, Sonoran Joint Venture, and BLM. We received grant funding from the Ft. Huachuca Thrift Store, Ft. Huachuca Community Spouses Club, and BLM's Hands on the Land program. The entire event was free to the public and all expenses were covered by the grants and sponsors.

Presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate Stabilization: Mud Party!

By Ron Stewart

On May 14, a group of 22 volunteers and employees of the Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and the National Park Service converged at the site of the Presidio of Santa Cruz de Terrenate to apply a protective layer of mud to the remaining walls of the structure. This is done every year to prevent further erosion. Terrenate dates to the 1780s. It was once home to a garrison of Spanish soldiers, Opatá Indian auxiliaries, and Spanish civilians whose mission was to protect the border area from possible French incursion and the depredations of the Apache, Suma, Janos, and other hostile tribes in the area.

The preservation effort was organized by Chris Schraeger, who has the BLM's lead for the preservation of historic structures in SPNRCA. Much of the expertise and labor was provided by the ruins stabilization/adobe expert crew from Tumacacori National Monument. Their hard work in the heat of the mid-May sun is greatly appreciated by the Friends, who were represented by a number of volunteers. The Friends also provided lunch and soft drinks for the group.

Charleston has been similarly protected by the BLM in recent years. We hope to protect the ruins of Brunckow's Cabin in the near future. Consider showing your appreciation for the historic sites in SPNRCA by attending the next Mud Party!!



Mud Party photos by Ron Stewart.



(Top) Participants gather for Wet-Dry Survey training. (Middle) Maura O'Brien (TNC) and Heather Swanson, (BLM) enjoyed the training. (Bottom) Laurel Lacher and Eva Nagy survey Curry Draw, noting increased vegetation. Photos by Ron Serviss.

2013 Wet-Dry Survey of the San Pedro

By Ron Serviss

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) conducted its 15th annual Wet-Dry Survey of the San Pedro River on June 15 and once again, FSPR was actively involved. On June 7, a pre-survey training was held at the gazebo behind San Pedro House and our organization provided food for the after-training barbeque. TNC and BLM staff conducted the training and handed out the survey kits to the team leaders.

Bright and early on Saturday morning, June 15, 15 teams set out to hike their segment of the river and record whether or not surface water was observed. Our teams essentially surveyed the river within SPRNCA, while teams in Mexico covered the San Pedro from its origin near Cananea, Sonora north to the International Border. Other groups surveyed from Benson north to the confluence with the Gila River. For the past few years, TNC has been able to survey the entire length of the San Pedro. Data collected will provide essential information for planners and caretakers of these lands.

My team covered Curry Draw from its start near Moson Road east to where it joins the San Pedro. While the water in the draw still doesn't reach the river at the surface, we were happy to note that there appeared to be significantly more water flowing in portions of the draw. There was a notable absence of signs of cattle. We noted a lot more vegetation in the bottom half of the draw, including many new cottonwoods and willows (which we equate with the absence of cattle).

[NOTE: When this issue went to press, we had not received this year's results.]

Southwest Wings Coming Up

Southwest Wings (SWW) Birding & Nature Festival—held for 22 years in Cochise County—is Arizona's oldest birding festival. It is ranked as one of the best birding festivals in the US. SWW celebrates the diversity of birds, mammals, reptiles, and insects found in southern Arizona's Sky Islands. San Pedro House will be among the vendors July 31-August 3 at the Cochise College campus. The festival includes 43 field trips—some of them overnight—and over 50 free programs on a wide variety of topics. Special children's programs are featured on Saturday, August 3. The keynote speaker at the Saturday dinner is Scott Weidensaul, author of *Of a Feather: A (Brief) History of American Birding*. The speaker at the Thursday night welcome address dinner is Jessica Lambertson-Moreno of the Sky Island Alliance on Sky Island carnivores. For more information, go to www.swwings.org.

Wild and Scenic Film Festival

By Ron Serviss

Last year, the Conservation Lands Foundation invited FSPR to be a host for the Wild and Scenic Film Festival. This national tour of award-winning short films on the environment is seen in some 200 cities and we were honored to be considered. After some initial glitches in Bisbee trying to locate a suitable venue, the festival occurred in April at Cochise College in Sierra Vista and at the Central School Project in Bisbee. This first year was a learning experience for us and, while the crowds were small, they were very appreciative of the quality and variety of the films. We also used this opportunity to showcase our own video on the San Pedro River.

There appears to be support for making this festival an annual event, each winter perhaps. If you ever pictured yourself rubbing elbows with the Hollywood elite at Sundance or Cannes, here is your chance to get started! Contact me to help plan next year's event.

The Birds of St. David

By Robert Weissler

Eight people participated in the St. David bird walk June 8 at the Holy Trinity Monastery. Among the highlights: a couple of Mississippi Kites soaring over the river, a Zone-tailed Hawk circling over a field between the monastery and the river, a heard but not seen Gray Hawk, and a pair of Tropical Kingbirds capturing dragonflies from the large pond near the entrance. Besides these target species, numerous colorful breeding birds were seen, including Bullock's Oriole, Yellow-breasted Chat, Summer Tanager, Vermilion Flycatcher, Gambel's Quail, Brown-crested Flycatcher, Phainopepla, Yellow Warbler, and Common Yellowthroat. Haunting calls of Common Ground-Dove could be heard throughout our visit to the river. In contrast to other areas along the San Pedro, the tamarisk is particularly thick in places here. Meanwhile, the exotic Common Peafowl have become down-right abundant at the monastery.



Some of the participants on the St. David's bird walk. Photo by Robert Weissler.

Local Award for BLM Ranger Robert Steele

Robert Steele won the 2013 U-Rock! award for recreational tourism in the Sierra Vista area from the Sierra Vista Tourism Commission. Steele's nomination reflected his widely acknowledged friendliness, positive attitude, local knowledge, and professionalism. This is the second time he has won the award.

Steele was born and raised in the San Pedro River area. He has dedicated his life to serving his land and country for 29 years in the Navy, the US Merchant Marines, as a US Forest Service ranger in the Dragoon Mountains, and now as park ranger on the San Pedro River. Steele has made a solemn vow to "save the river." Every day, he performs triage on the most impacted areas.

After the Fire

By Ted Mouras

In the Huachuca Mountains, both Hunter and Ash Canyons were badly burned by the Monument Fire of 2011, leaving a mosaic of damaged and undamaged areas. Since the fire, the level of recreational shooting has grown significantly in these canyons. This has resulted in further damage to the national forest and led to incidents that have caused other users of the canyons to raise concerns about safety.

While most recreational shooters are responsible and safety-conscious, some are not. Reports to the US Forest Service (USFS) include numerous incidents of unsafe shooting, trash (e.g., targets; shell casings) left behind by shooters, and damage to Forest Service lands and to the remaining live trees. As such, recreational shooting is having an adverse impact on those wishing to use the canyons for other purposes. Hikers have reported being unable to safely use canyon trails, and one resident reported collecting more than 52 pounds of brass shell casings.

By autumn 2012, concerns over public safety and continuing damage to National Forest lands prompted the USFS to intervene. USFS responsibilities include protecting our national forests, ensuring those forests are able to be used for multiple purposes, and public safety on Forest Service land. To help identify the best ways to meet its responsibilities in Hunter and Ash Canyons, the USFS formed a Multi-use Collaborative Alternatives Team (CAT) to work with the local community to find ways to ensure these canyons remain safe multi-use areas.

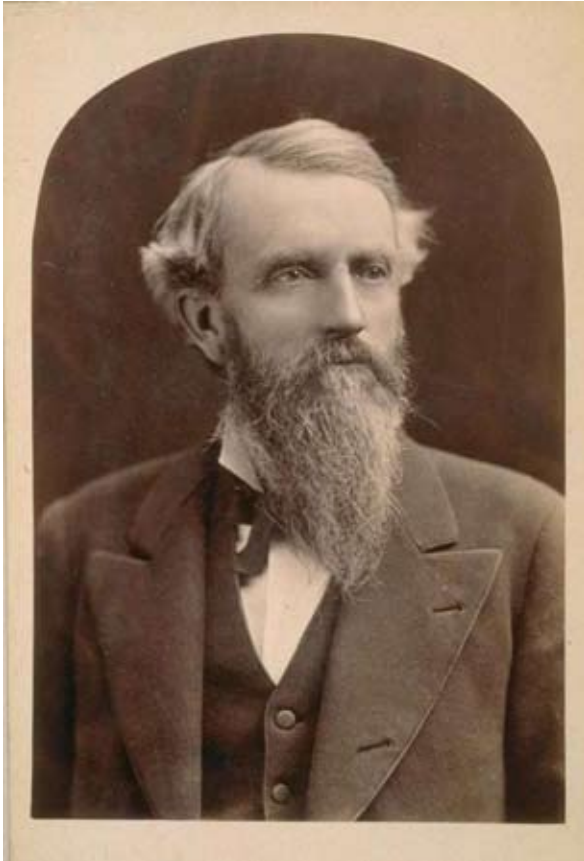
The CAT includes people representing a variety of local interests. These include the recreational shooting community, the Friends of the Huachuca Mountains, biking clubs, equestrian users of the trails, residents living in the vicinity of the two canyons, the National Rifle Association, hiking clubs, Huachuca Audubon Society, prospectors, a local shooting range, and the birding community.

As of May 18, the Multi-use CAT has met twice and toured Hunter Canyon. The primary concern identified in both meetings was public safety. Along with that concern was the expressed desire to ensure that the canyons remain open for multiple uses, including continued recreational shooting. Protection of our National Forest lands, recovery from the Monument Fire, and protection of endangered species were brought up, as was the issue of noise associated with weapons fire.

Several proposals are being looked at to address these concerns. These include educating both shooters and nonshooters on responsible shooting behavior, enforcement of pertinent laws, dissemination of information on other shooting venues available in the area, creation of an adopt-a-canyon program to help keep the canyons clean, protection of environmentally sensitive areas, and establishment of designated shooting areas. Subsequent meetings will refine these proposals and begin to identify possible designated shooting areas in both canyons.

Much remains to be done, but the Multi-use CAT is off to a good start and should be ready to provide the USFS with a set of proposed solutions before the end of the year.

The author is a recreational shooter, hiker, and birder. He is the civilian chairman of the Multi-use CAT.



George Hearst.

The Boquillas Land Grant and the Evictions of 1906

By Ron Stewart

Although the war between the United States and Mexico ended in 1848, to this day, disputes are being caused by U.S. implementation of the peace treaty's provisions regarding land grants. This flared into violence in 1967 when Hispano activist Reis Tijerina seized the Rio Arriba County Courthouse in Tierra Amarilla, New Mexico. Today, real estate development in areas near Taos, New Mexico, is being forestalled due to uncertainties over the ownership of Spanish grants.

What you may not know is that between 1880 and 1906, the middle San Pedro River valley went through its own controversy over land grants, causing just as much legal strife and hardship in our area.

The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, which ended the Mexican-American War, called for the United States to recognize the legitimacy of land grants that had been issued by Spain and Mexico. However, as implemented, owners of land grants had to prove ownership within the U.S. legal

system. The confusing, expensive, political, and sometimes corrupt processes created to do this confused ownership and, according to the newspapers of the day, significantly hindered the economic development of the Arizona Territory.

In what was then northern Sonora, now Arizona, the Mexican Government issued 20 land grants during the 1820s and 1830s, eight in what became Cochise County.

Two land grants along the San Pedro River are of primary interest here. The San Juan de las Boquillas y Nogales grant (Saint John of the Little Springs and Walnut Trees) ran north along the San Pedro from near the Charleston Bridge to 4 miles south of Saint David. Rafael Elias Gonzales, scion of the still prominent Elias family of Sonora and Arizona, applied for this grant. Captain Ignacio Elias Gonzales, cousin to Rafael, applied for the San Rafael del Valle grant, which stretched from near the Hereford Bridge north to the southern edge of the Boquillas grant. Each was roughly 4 "sitios" in size, centered on the San Pedro, or 4 square leagues, a league being 2.63 miles. Sonora approved both grants in 1833 for 240 pesos each.

Northern Sonora was enjoying a brief respite from Apache conflicts during this period, based on the late Spanish and early Mexican policy of providing food to the Apache near settlements and military outposts. During this relatively peaceful period, the land grants prospered as cattle ranches. As an example, another grant nearby on the Babocomari River (the San Ignacio del Babocomari grant, also owned by an Elias, Eulalia Elias), was stocked with 40,000 cattle. However, the end of the food rationing to the Apache led to renewed aggression. As a result, by the late 1830s, Mexican settlement had contracted to a few core areas, primarily along the Santa Cruz River at Tucson and Tubac. By the 1840s, wild cattle roaming the San Pedro were nearly the only remnant of this brief period of prosperity.

Moving ahead 30 years to 1876, most of what became eastern Cochise County, then part of Pima County in the Arizona Territory, was designated as the Chiricahua Apache Reservation. Due to accusations of

raiding, the reservation was abolished in 1876. Soldiers, prospectors, and ranchers began to enter the San Pedro valley. A rush ensued after discovery of silver (Tombstone) and copper (Bisbee), both in 1877.

During the Tombstone silver boom (1877-86), ore-processing mills were established at several locations along the San Pedro within the Boquillas land grant. Numerous ranches and farms were started in both grants to provide food for the new mining boomtown as well as Fort Huachuca, which was established in 1877. Railroad surveys conducted of the river valley in the early 1880s showed farms and ranches along most of the river in the Boquillas grant.

George Hearst and other former California 49ers, now wealthy entrepreneurs operating from San Francisco, recognized the Mexican land grants as investment opportunities. In our area, George Hill Howard sought out the descendants of the Elias family and, in partnership with Hearst, purchased the Boquillas land grant in 1880. Hearst eventually became the sole owner. The Del Valle land grant was purchased in 1890 by another Mexican family, the Camou, and in 1911 became part of the vast holdings of "Colonel" William C. Greene. George Hearst was no stranger to the area—he owned mining claims, was an investor in mines and mills, and was a visitor to Tombstone in 1880, where the story is, Wyatt Earp served as an escort.

Of the 20 Mexican land grants in Arizona, courts in the United States eventually approved 8. One interesting Arizona anecdote centers on the 1880 failed attempt by James Reavis to claim a Mexican land grant covering a huge area running from Phoenix to Safford based on documents he had forged. This story became a movie in 1950, "The Baron of Arizona," starring Vincent Price as Reavis. Other disapproved land grants included the San Pedro grant to the south of the del Valle grant and the Tres Alamos grant, also on the San Pedro north of modern Benson.

In 1881, one year after the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad at Benson, the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad built a line south from Benson along the San Pedro, through the Boquillas land grant to the Babocomari River and then west and south to Nogales. A railroad hub and then town were established where the railroad turned west up the Babocomari, at first called Kendall Station, then renamed Fairbank in 1882. A post office opened in 1883 and Fairbank soon became a depot in Cochise County for the shipment of cattle and concentrated ore and the receipt of manufactured goods of all kinds. The Fairbank Mercantile—built in 1882 and still standing at the Fairbank town site on SPRNCA—was a focal point for this busy trade.

George Hearst and George Howard sold portions of the Boquillas grant as sites for the Contention Mill, Grand Central Mill, Tombstone Gold and Silver Mining Company (Millville, Gird Mill), and a ranch owned by Charles Meyer north of Charleston. The New Mexico and Arizona Railroad purchased from Hearst its right of way and facilities at Fairbank. Land was purchased for the site of the mill town of Contention. All other occupants of the land grant area based their ownership on homestead claims, preemption ("squatting"), or purchase from rival claimants to the land grant.

In 1891, the U.S. established the Court of Private Land Claims to validate land grant claims and attempt to sort out the problems caused by the U.S. Surveyor Office, which had previously validated claims. William Randolph Hearst and Phoebe Hearst, the son and widow of George Hearst, filed papers to have their exclusive claim to the Boquillas land grant recognized.

In 1899, the Land Claim Court ruled that only the Hearsts had valid title to the land grant. A group of 30 residents of the land grant area soon filed a lawsuit to dispute the ruling, which worked its way through the courts to the U.S. Supreme Court, which affirmed the Land Claims court decision in 1906. The Del Valle Grant went through a similar chain of legal actions that culminated in Supreme Court approval (over-ruling disapproval by the Land Claims court) in 1898 and another appearance in the Supreme Court in 1902 to settle issues related to the boundaries of the grant.

In 1901, while their case was still pending, the Hearsts sold the Boquillas grant to the Kern County Land and Cattle Company. This new owner, a huge mining and ranching conglomerate from California, formed the Boquillas Land and Cattle Company in 1901 and began to raise cattle on the land grant as part of their new Little Boquillas Ranch.

The 1906 Supreme Court decision triggered an exodus of people from the Boquillas grant. Contemporary survey maps of the area show that most of the Boquillas land grant was occupied by farms or ranches, most of which now lost title to their lands. Fairbank and Charleston were both affected, although Charleston was largely deserted by 1906. Newspapers from the era recounted the impact on the evicted: sad stories of lost homes, farms, and businesses. The Boquillas Land and Cattle Company filed actions forbidding residents from removing improvements or property from their former homes.

The impact of the eviction was not as bad as it might have been. The San Pedro valley's population had declined in the two decades leading up to 1906. Flooding in the silver mines at Tombstone, closure or movement of the remaining mills to Tombstone, drought, overgrazing, and flooding all served to reduce the uses made of the valley.

When the legal actions were complete, all that remained were the businesses and residents favored by the Boquillas Land and Cattle Company, now paying rent, along with those few living on land sold previously by Hearst and Howard. Fairbank, for example, was mostly inhabited by employees of the railroads and the new Little Boquillas Ranch, along with a few remaining businesses, like the Mercantile. Interestingly, a small Chinese community that had been farming near Fairbank remained in place.

The goal of the Boquillas Land and Cattle Company was to amass an area in which to commence large-scale cattle ranching. In 1912, it purchased the Del Valle land grant from the estate of William Greene. From 1901 until 1971, the Boquillas Land and Cattle Company conducted ranching along the San Pedro from its headquarters near Fairbank. Hundreds of thousands of Little Boquillas Ranch cattle were shipped from the cattle pens still extant across the highway from the Fairbank town site on SPRNCA. The Kern Land and Cattle Company, parent to the Boquillas, was known for its generally enlightened ranching practices throughout the West.

The Tenneco Oil Company gained title to the Del Valle and Boquillas land grants in 1971 through acquisition of the parent Kern County Land and Cattle Company. In 1986, the Boquillas and del Valle grants became the basis for today's San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. Ironically, the action of the Boquillas Land and Cattle Company to depopulate the area in 1906 served to protect the fragile ruins of places like the Presidio de Santa Cruz de Terenate, Drew's Station, Contention City, the Clanton Ranch, Fairbank, and Charleston, all important cultural heritage sites now protected within SPRNCA.

For more information on this topic, I recommend the two new books written by local historian John D. Rose, *On the Road to Tombstone: Drew's Station, Contention City and Fairbank and Charleston & Millville, A.T. Hell on the San Pedro*, available at San Pedro House and the Fairbank Schoolhouse bookstore.

Soaptree Yucca (Family Agavaceae, *Yucca elata*)

By Gerald R Noonan, PhD © May 2013

Recognition. These yuccas are recognized by their overall physical appearance. Young specimens grow as a rosette composed of narrow leaves. The leaves are up to 2.5 feet in length, yellowish green, and have threadlike fine fibers along the white margins and a sharp spine at the terminal end of each. The rosette arrangement of the leaves channels moisture to the center of the plants. As the yuccas grow, a fibrous trunk raises the rosette of leaves progressively upwards. New leaves are vertical and encased within the center of the rosette of more mature leaves. As each leaf grows, it assumes an acute angle to the stem and over time, becomes horizontal or slightly drooping in position. Older leaves gradually point increasingly downward. Dead leaves remain on the trunks for many years. Mature Soaptree Yuccas are erect in form and may have trunks as high as 20 feet and with 5-foot-long flower stalks. These plants often occur in clonal clusters that are the result of vegetative reproduction. The evergreen leaves radiate outwards from the tops of the trunks. Mature specimens may have trunks that branch at the top and produce several rosettes of leaves. From approximately May into July, the yuccas have upright flower stalks that are as long as approximately 5 feet and whose ends have a dense cluster of flowers. The creamy white flowers are bell shaped and up to about 2 inches in length. The flowers give way to ~ 2-inch-long brown seed capsules that each have three interior cells (see photo, p. 16).



Young Soaptree Yucca.



Soaptree Yucca with flower stalks.



Soaptree Yucca flowers.



Leaves in rosette. Note the many whitish fibers.

All photos in this article © Gerald R Noonan, PhD.



Soaptree Yucca seed capsules

In her 2006 analysis of the plants of SPRNCA, Makings listed Soaptree Yuccas as common. She also provided a photograph of a hybrid between the Banana Yucca (*Yucca baccata*) and the Sierra Madre Yucca (*Yucca madrensis*). Makings listed the hybrid as infrequent within SPRNCA, collected in the Hereford area. The hybrids differ from Soaptree Yuccas by having a shorter form (trunks only reaching ~ 8 feet), having thicker and more succulent leaves that do not have a spine at the tip of each, and a much shorter flower stalk. The hybrid also flowers earlier, producing flowers from April to May vs. the May to July flowers of Soaptree Yucca. Makings did not describe the fruit of the yucca, but both of the species that comprise the rare hybrids have fleshy, banana-like fruits, in contrast to the woody capsules of Soaptree Yuccas.

Geographical Distribution. Soaptree Yucca occurs in southeastern Nevada, central and southern Arizona, southern New Mexico, western Texas, and Coahuila and Chihuahua, Mexico. It occurs in habitats such as desert scrub communities and semi-desert grasslands. It is one of the few plants able to survive on sand dunes. Soaptree Yucca is common in many places within SPRNCA.

Uses by Humans or Their Domestic Animals. Food uses by Native Americans included boiling flowers and eating them as vegetables; cooking flowers in soups or stews; cooking trunks in pits and pounding them into flour or drying and storing them for future food use; and cooking young stalks, then peeling and eating them while

hot. Other uses included weaving leaves into trays or baskets; using fibers from the leaves to make ropes; using leaves to form a head shade for a cradleboard; weaving leaves into mats; using the red roots for basket decorations; using roots for soap; and using leaves to make a fastening loop for sandals. Wislizenus reported in 1848 that the wood of the Soaptree Yucca was too porous and spongy to be very useful, but that poor people in northern Mexico built their huts entirely from this plant. The accumulated dead leaves on the trunks of the yuccas burn well, and cowboys or travelers often lit them to briefly acquire a warming place.

Cattle readily eat Soaptree Yucca flowers and fresh, tender flower stalks. Cows will even push over the trunks of tall yuccas to get at the flowering stalks and flowers. When other food is limited, cattle learn to feed on the green leaves by chewing them outward from the stem to avoid the sharp ends. Studies have shown that some cattle during the spring prefer Soaptree Yucca flowers and developing flower stalks over other foods. Some of these cattle were adept at locating and cropping developing flower stalks and spent most of their grazing time searching for them. Cattle would sometimes fight for the flowers and stalks and, if necessary, would stand on their hind legs to reach them.

Ranchers have used Soaptree Yuccas as emergency food for cattle. By 1900 or so, much of the rangelands in the southwestern US had been stocked to a level where periodic droughts resulted in insufficient feed for cattle. Ranchers tried processing various native plants to make them more palatable to cattle. By the early part of the 20th century, Soaptree Yucca was the most frequently used emergency food. People

initially harvested and chopped these plants into small pieces with hand axes. This process was tedious and required one person for every 40 cows. Moreover, hand chopping often produced pieces that were too large, resulting in cows choking while attempting to swallow them. By around 1918, several specially designed machines were available for converting Soapstone Yucca stems to fodder. (Photos of Soapstone Yucca harvesting and conversion to fodder can be found in the 1990 paper by Wood et al.)

Pollination Biology. Scientists have been intrigued for more than a century by the complex pollination biology of yuccas, including Soapstone Yuccas. These plants depend upon female yucca moths for pollination. The moths emerge from pupation chamber at the base of yucca plants and mate. The females use specialized, tentacle-like mouthparts to collect pollen from a Soapstone Yucca, afterwards flying to flowers on a different stalk. The females lay their eggs in the ovary of a newly opened flower. They then use their specialized mouthparts to pack the pollen down into a cavity on the female part of the flower. Soapstone Yucca flowers will only produce seeds if pollen is packed into that cavity. The moth larvae feed only on yucca seeds and therefore only have food if the female packs the pollen into the appropriate cavity. The yucca moth larvae don't eat all of the seeds, and both the moth and the yucca depend on each other for sexual reproduction. If the Yucca moth lays too many eggs, the extra weight may result in the yucca shedding the flower.

Scientists are studying how Soapstone Yuccas and other yuccas defend themselves against "cheaters" moths. Two cheaters species have evolved from the moths that pollinate yuccas. The cheater moths have lost the tentacles that are used for pollination, emerge later than the pollinators, and lay their eggs directly into the fruit of yuccas. The cheaters do not pollinate the yuccas and thus depend completely on their pollinating relatives for reproduction. The cheaters exploit the fact that five days after successful pollination, the addition of excessive numbers of eggs no longer causes the flower to drop off. Biologists still don't understand all of the defense mechanisms used by yuccas. However, some studies suggest that these mechanisms may involve highly variable timing of fruit production and the fact that abortion rates of developing fruits is high, even for those without too many moth eggs. This high abortion rate may favor risk spreading strategies of egg laying in which the female deposits eggs into several flowers, rather than into a single one.

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Events Calendar, July-September

[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—July 6, 13, 20, 27

☛ 8 AM—August 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

☛ 8 AM—September 7, 14, 21, 28

FSPR Bird Walks

Second Wednesday & Fourth Saturday at SPH

☛ 7 AM—July 10 (Wed); July 27 (Sat)

☛ 7 AM—August 14 (Wed); August 24 (Sat)

☛ 7 AM—Sept 11 (Wed); Sept 28 (Sat)

FSPR/HAS/SABO Bird Walks

Every Sunday at Sierra Vista Environmental Operations Park (EOP)

☛ 7 AM—July 7, 14, 21, 28

☛ 7 AM—August 4, 11, 18, 25

☛ 7 AM—September 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

Special Events

☛ July 18 (Thur), 7 PM—Lecture on “Audubon’s Western Rivers Action Network” by Sarah Luna and Sarah Porter (see article, p. 3)

☛ July 31-Aug 3—Southwest Wings Festival (see article, p. 9)

☛ August 15 (Thur), 7 PM—Lecture on “Tombstone 1881” by Ed Riggs (see article, p. 3)

☛ August 17 (Sat), 8 AM—Millville History Walk

☛ September 14 (Sat), 8 AM—Monthly hike (Hereford Bridge north), bird walk with Robert Weissler

☛ September 19 (Thur), 7 PM—Lecture on Natural History, speaker and topic TBD (see article, p. 3)

☛ September 21 (Sat), 8 AM—Fairbank History Walk

☛ September 28 (Sat), TBD—National Public Lands Day

New & Renewing Members, March-June 2013

Suzanne Arnold*, Eric Aronson*, Leslie Baird, Perrie & Michael Barnes*, John Barthelme, Susan Bassett*, Terence Berger, Earl & Rowena Bradshaw, Becca & Charlie Brandes*, Bruce & Melinda Burke*, Jerry & Pat Cagle*, Margaret & Bill Case, Tim Cervantes/ Cochise Water Project*, Tom & Lin Clancy, Eddie Collins & Joan Marschel*, Henry (Steve) & Marjorie Conroy, David & Sherry Cunningham, Philip Davis*, Elise Foladare*, Pete Goldlust*, Amy Haratatos & Jesse Davisson*, James Harkin*, Jim & Karen Havlena, Ken & Sandy Heusman, Wes Jensen, John Jones*, Laurie Klauser*, Lori & James Kovash, Sarah Lane & JW Stengel*, Don Leistikow*, Rick Marsi*, Christopher & Catherine Mathews*, Teresa & Ruben Miranda, Ted & Melanie Mouras, Jim Peterson*, Carol Roche*, Regina Rutledge, Karl & Mary Schneider, Tom & Judy Shepherd*, Ann Stewart*, Gail & Duane Sudman*, Doris & Reginald Turner*, Francis Ugolini & Lorraine Mulia, Claire Weissler*, Walter Wick*, Erika Wilson, Tom Wood & Sheri Williamson*

* = New member

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- Docent Activities—Tom Clancy, Ron Stewart
- Education—John Rose, Sandy Kunzer
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- Communications Coordinator—Éva Nagy
- Newsletter Editor—Sue Leskiw
- Executive Director—Robert Weissler
- Bookstore Manager—Laura Mackin
- Bookkeeper—Pam Collins

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

sanpedrohouse@sanpedroriver.org or fsprdirector@sanpedroriver.org.

Mailing address: 1763 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635; Fax: 520-459-7334

Website: 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.