

SAN PEDRO RIVER

**An Anthology of Articles
Volume 2**



Compiled by Dutch Nagle & Chris Long

FORWARD:

These articles were written for publication by the Sierra Vista Herald newspaper. They are intended to inform the public about the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. The Friends of the San Pedro River hope that they are informative and improve understanding of the river, its ecology, and history.

All the articles were written by BLM staffers or members of the Friends of the San Pedro River and reviewed by a panel comprised of Friends and BLM personnel.

With thanks to all the writers and reviewers over the years.

**Friends of the San Pedro River
1763 Paseo San Luis
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
Phone: (520) 459-2555
Email: fspr@sanpedroriver.org
Website: www.sanpedroriver.org**

Cover photo by Dwight Long

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Fairbank Lives On	By Jane Childress.....5
Millville and Charleston	By Jane Childress.....8
Petroglyphs, Prussians, and Percussion	By Chris Long.....11
Biking the San Pedro River	By Robert Weissler14
Ghosts of Cochise County	By Alice Hawker16
Open Space And Public Lands	By Douglas Snow19
Enjoy Your River	By Dutch Nagle.....22
The Measure of Our River	By Ted Mouras25
Do You Believe In Beavers?	By Mike Foster28
School Days Are Here Again!	By Jane Childress.....31
Bird Migration	By Alan Blixt.....34
Escapule - Nature and History	By Chris Long.....37
San Pedro River Monitoring	By Sandy and Betsy Kunzer39
Connect the Dots	By Dutch Nagle.....41

Fairbank Lives On

By Jane Childress

Only two people, a dog, and a few cats live in Fairbank, Arizona today. But it wasn't always that way. One hundred twenty years ago, Fairbank was a busy transportation hub, with three railroad depots and stage coaches coming and going. It was the center of commerce and social activity for the people living along the San Pedro River. It was where all the area children came to school. The original wooden schoolhouse burned down, and in 1920, a new schoolhouse was built out of "gypsum block" made in Douglas, Arizona. In 1925, an addition was built, making it a three-room schoolhouse. Actually, the original building was one-room but a partition (long missing) separated it into two rooms.

The town still had people living there well into the 1950s but the town was slowly dying and by the 1970s only a roadside store with a gas pump remained. And then the last inhabitants of Fairbank closed up and left. The remaining buildings - the large adobe mercantile store, the board and batten-style store and house, the schoolhouse, the frame house, the outhouse, and the garage fell into disrepair. Windows were broken and items were taken away. The old train depot for the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad was moved to Tombstone.

When the old Spanish land grants that now make up the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) were acquired by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 1986, the place was literally a mess. The mercantile building, where Barry M. Goldwater's grandfather once ran a store, began to fall down. Thus began the long process of bringing Fairbank back to life. A different life in this next century, but a life it will have.

The BLM set up the office there from 1986-1994, in a couple of trailers. People stopped by to see the old place, and to offer photographs and stories of their lives along the San Pedro. The people were not forgotten and a list was formed by the first site host for a yearly "Fairbank Reunion" held every fall since 1994. The Reunion for 2006 included include a dedication for the restored schoolhouse, which is open for visitors to enjoy.

Taking care of old buildings is very costly but several years ago the BLM secured an Enhancement Act grant from the Federal Highway Administration. With this partnership and the money it provided,

coupled with BLM funding and expertise, much has been accomplished. A few years ago, the Arizona Department of Transportation built turn lanes for a new entrance that is safer. New parking areas were completed on both sides of State Route 82 making it easier for large recreational vehicles and trucks with horse trailers to get in and out. New trails and interpretive exhibits have been placed.

The school house foundation and walls were stabilized and the roof was completely removed, fixed, and then replaced. The windows were fixed and the doors were replicated, the ceiling replaced and electricity restored. Plastering, painting, patching, and even decorating: the list goes on and on! Exhibits on the history of the area and the early schooling are now on display inside.

The building now contains a small museum and a bookstore as well as an old school room where children can experience school “the old-fashioned way.” It also serves as a visitor’s center where information about all of the trails that radiate from Fairbank and other sites along the San Pedro River can be obtained.

You see, Fairbank is still a transportation hub. On foot, mountain bike or horseback, from Fairbank you easily can visit the Fairbank Cemetery, the Grand Central ore-processing mill, the Presidio Santa Cruz de Terrenate (a 1776 Spanish fort), the Little Boquillas Ranch, and of course, the beautiful San Pedro River.

About the Author: Jane Childress is an Archaeologist with BLM.



Student Conservation Associate (SCA) works on the restoration of the old schoolhouse, at Fairbank
Photo courtesy of BLM

Born of the Tombstone mining boom in 1879, the sister cities of Millville and Charleston could not have been more different. On the east side of the San Pedro River was Millville, the first-born. It was called Millville for good reason; there were two ore-processing mills built on the hills next to the river. One was owned and operated by Richard Gird, a partner of Ed Shieffelin, the founder of Tombstone, and Anson P.K. Safford, the first territorial Governor of Arizona and the other was owned by the Corbin brothers, Phillip and George.

Just a short time later, Charleston was born on a nice flat piece of land on the west side of the river. No one remembers exactly why it was called Charleston, but some say that its founder, Amos Stowe, had come from a place called Charleston.

Millville was all business and industry and run by Dick Gird, a prospector, engineer and shrewd businessman. Oh, there were social events, held in Dick and Nellie Gird's beautiful and spacious home, which also held the offices of the Tombstone Mining and Milling Company. The home was described as the "best house in Arizona" in the 1880s. These parties were elegant events for the wealthy and connected, with everyone dressed in the finest attire, drinking the choicest vintage wine and smoking fine cigars. There was no fighting or misbehaving. Gird did not ever allow any nonsense businesses, like saloons or bars, to be built in Millville. Across the river, however, it was quite a different story.

Now, Gird had good reasons for trying to control the drinking. Most of the men in town worked for him or the Corbin's in the large stamp mills. This was hot, grueling and dangerous work and he wanted his workers to have their wits about them during work hours. Too much drinking wouldn't have helped matters, so he did what he could to curtail it. He ran the mills 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There were good reasons for this, too. It was simply more efficient to keep the mills running because of the energy required to start them up. They were shut down only rarely, for repairs. Once when some of his investors from back East visited, they took offense that Sunday was not being kept as a day of rest and worship. But Gird knew that if he gave the men a whole day off, they would neither rest, nor worship. They would spend the whole time in the numerous bars and brothels of

Charleston drinking and gambling. Come Monday, no one would be fit for work.

Legend has it that Charleston was wilder than Tombstone, and there may have been some truth to that. Most people know about Wyatt Earp, his brothers, and Doc Holliday who were credited with bringing law and order to nearby Tombstone, mainly by outlawing the carrying of guns within the town, and by confronting the unruly Clanton Gang. Now Charleston was run by Judge Jim Burnett, also known as Justice Jim, who had no such restrictions on firearms, nor any restrictions on drinking, gambling, and other unruly behavior. You see, when the Earp's took some of the fun out of Tombstone, the Clanton Gang made Charleston their home.

Justice Jim wore many hats in Charleston; he was the only town employee – sheriff, judge, and treasurer. It was said that he held court at the end of his shotgun, if necessary. When a complaint was brought to his attention he didn't delay court proceedings and he was astute at deciding appropriate penalties. Trials were always speedy in Charleston with Judge Burnett deliberating! He collected all fines and used the money for the good of the town, and for Jim Burnett, of course. Cochise County Supervisors collected the County's share of taxes and fines from all of the developing towns, and expected the same from Charleston. Burnett didn't ask for anything from the Supervisors and didn't see the logic of giving them something for nothing – so he didn't! He believed his system worked just fine and never acquiesced to their requests for money.

The wild days of Charleston came to an end around 1884 when the mines in Tombstone were dug deep enough to hit water. One mill was dismantled and moved to Tombstone, saving the cost and effort of hauling the ore nine miles by mule train. There were a couple of years of stockpiled ore to process, and the mercantile businesses in Charleston hung on those few years by supplying the lucrative smuggling operations so close to the border. Naturally a few saloons stayed in business, but the town slowly but surely died. By the time the railroad was built through town in 1889, it was largely abandoned. The railroad workers and their families who moved in pretty much had their choice of what housing was left.

Today, you can visit Millville very easily. The Bureau of Land Management has converted the old wagon roads into trails that are

open to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians. You can learn more about Millville and Charleston through the exhibits on the upper Millville trail. On the Petroglyph, or lower trail you can visit petroglyphs (also called rock art) of the Hohokam Indians who lived along the river from about 300 B.C. to A.D. 1450.

About the Author: Jane Childress is an Archaeologist with BLM.



The ruins of the Gird House lie behind the trailside exhibit at the Millville Ghost Town

Photo by Jane Childress

Petroglyphs, Prussians, and Percussion By Chris Long

The Millville and Discovery Trails in the San Pedro Riparian Natural Conservation Area (SPRNCA) are an easy and enjoyable way to learn about the long human history of our area. The loop trail is well-defined (you won't get lost) and flat (unusual for trails around here).

Humans have inhabited the San Pedro Valley since Clovis times 13,000 years ago. You can see traces of these early settlers at Murray Springs. Here at Millville are remnants of the Hohokam culture. These tribes grew corn in the valley from about A.D. 500 to A.D. 1400. Their traces are seen in the petroglyphs found at twelve different sites along the river. These Millville petroglyphs are some of the most accessible. (A petroglyph is a drawing or design chipped into the mineral deposits on the surface of a stone.) The most obvious of these looks a bit like a child's "hopscotch" figure. There are also spirals and other geometrics, and something that looks like a deer or antelope.

Miners looking for silver and gold were the first to explore and settle in the area in the 1870s and 1880s. Some found it and prospered, others found it and died.

Thar's silver in them thar hills! And there was. We have all heard the story of Ed Schieffelin heading off with the advice that he would only find his tombstone in those hills east of the San Pedro. But, silver was already known to be in the area. In 1858, Frederick Brunckow, a Prussian exiled from Germany for his participation in the 1848 revolution was a scholar and a scientist. He staked a mining claim just east of the river. There he employed a mine superintendent, an assayer, a machinist, and a German cook, not to mention a number of Mexican laborers. What happened to this early pioneer has become the subject of legend. One story says he was killed by an Indian arrow and fell into his own mineshaft. But a more ominous story says that he and his crew were mysteriously killed while the superintendent was off fetching supplies. Brunckow was found in the mineshaft with a rock drill through his heart. The cook survived and blamed the massacre on the Mexican peons, but no evidence was ever found. To this day, rumors still persist of high quality silver waiting to be found in the Brunckow mine. Many believe that the cabin ruins are haunted. Eerie sounds and ghostly apparitions are reported by visitors.

Twenty years after Brunckow's death, Ed and Al Schieffelin and their partner Richard Gird found the promised riches. With mines in Tombstone and the processing plants along the river, the Tombstone Mill and Mining Company prospered.

From 1879 to 1889, the stamp mills along the San Pedro River ran 24 hours per day seven days a week, pulverizing the ore and extracting the silver. One can imagine Mrs. Richard Gird sitting on the porch of "the finest building...in southern Arizona" with her sister-in-law Emily Gird. As Emily remarked on the dreadful noise, Mrs. Gird might have responded, "That's the sound of money, honey." The mill at Millville churned out \$1,380,336.86 in silver bullion at its height in 1881 (that's \$26,383,004.68 in today's dollars). For ten years, from 1879 until its abandonment in 1889, Millville and its "bedroom" community of Charleston had a reputation as a "wild and wicked place", even tougher than Tombstone. Local justice was enforced by Judge James Burnett, who ruled with a heavy hand. But all of this true "wild west" atmosphere came to a close when the Tombstone mines flooded in 1886 and the need for the processing plants faded away.

The Millville trailhead is located about two-tenths of a mile east of the Charleston Bridge. It's not a long walk, but there's not a lot of shade, so bring water and a hat!

About the Author: Chris Long is a past president and a docent for the Friends of the San Pedro River.



Chris Long standing at the ruins of "the finest building... in southern Arizona." The remains of the Tombstone Mill and Mining Company office and home of Mr. Richard Gird
Photo by Dwight Long

Normally, when people think about recreational activities in the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), they think of hiking, birding, picnicking, camping, fishing, and for some, even hunting. But there is another popular activity that is not so commonly associated with the San Pedro River, namely mountain biking. Mountain biking is not just about riding in the mountains! The SPRNCA is an excellent place for a ride with varied terrain. From relatively flat dirt roads with sandy patches to rolling terrain above the flood plain, trails are easy to moderately strenuous to negotiate.

Mountain biking can be both a social event and a great way to get the exercise that all of us need to stay healthy. It is also a way to cover a lot of ground quickly, yet see an intimate side of the riparian area and its gallery forest where motorized vehicles cannot go. On a bicycle, you can get away from it all very quickly and reach remote areas most hikers do not see. Visit Garden Wash, Escapule Wash, see a champion cottonwood tree, pictographs at Millville, or the site of the long-lost fortification at Santa Cruz de Terranate. Some good points of departure are parking areas at San Pedro House, Murray Springs, Hereford Bridge (when the river is not at flood stage!), Palominas, Millville, and Fairbank.

During the summer, some caution is needed regarding weather and river flooding. The flow of the river is spectacular during a flood, an awesome thing to behold, but also worth caution to avoid getting swept away. Do not cross the river in such circumstances. Also, avoid riding on trails that are muddy and wet to prevent tearing up the trail.

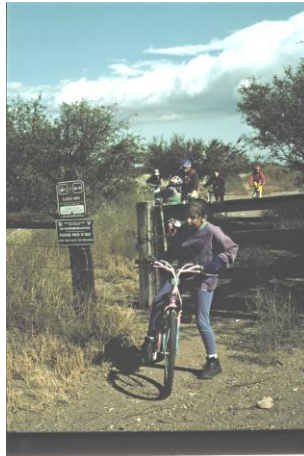
Of course, before you can go riding, you need the proper equipment, including an impact-resistant helmet, water bottles, the proper shoes, compact bicycle pump, spare tubes, and food including energy bars, fruit, and other snacks. Local bicycle shops like M&M, Sun 'n Spokes, and the sporting goods department of local stores like Target, Wal-mart, not to mention Big 5 Sporting Goods, carry such equipment and supplies. A trail map, if available, or at least a map of the SPRNCA, will help orient you as you go on your way. San Pedro House and the Sierra Vista field office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offer maps and other information on the SPRNCA. Oh, and make sure to bring a pocket camera - there is plenty of great scenery that awaits you along the San Pedro River! San Pedro House is also a great place for

first timers to get oriented with the trails and resources along the river. The Del Valle Road is an excellent route along the west side of the San Pedro since it is relatively flat and not too strenuous for beginning recreational cyclists.

Break out of your standard ride with something different for a refreshing change. Pick a different route to familiar destinations, or better yet, plan a new route of discovery to experience the spirit of adventure. It's a great way to reconnect with the natural world if you haven't been to the river recently. And bring the whole family, including children if you have suitable equipment for them, to share the experience. With children along, plan a route and pace suitable for their level of experience.

Since hikers, birders, picnickers, campers, fishermen, and hunters are all out there enjoying the SPRNCA, remember to follow principles of safety and be aware of your surroundings as you ride. That way everyone can share the trails safely and maximize their outdoor experience.

About the Author: Robert Weissler is a past vice-president and docent for the Friends of the San Pedro River.



Bikers enjoying a ride in the SPRNCA
Photo courtesy of BLM

Ghostly shadows...apparitions...haunted buildings. Settlers of the western United States were a special breed – brave and headstrong, but almost obsessed with finding their own little place in a virtually unknown wilderness. They lived daily on the edge of danger and violent death. This death took many forms, given the often hostile environment, wildlife, and people they found. Cochise County is rife with tales of spirits of the departed that restlessly wander the world of the living.

What I tell you now are stories told to me by longtime county inhabitants and researchers of the unexplained. As I stated, people who settled here, scratching a living from this inhospitable environment, were a strongly independent and determined people. They had to be to survive. So when death did win, their spirits often refused to move on, instead staying near to what was familiar to them in life. As an example, many have heard of “La Luna,” the lady in white who haunts the area around the old Charleston Road Bridge between Sierra Vista and Tombstone. The story has changed over the years, but as it was told to me, the specter is of a woman who either lost her two children crossing the flooded San Pedro River or had thrown them in to drown in order to ‘save’ them from starvation. In death, her spirit is wracked with guilt and is now compelled to search for her children. La Luna has appeared to many an unwary traveler crossing the bridge late at night on that lonely stretch of road. If they are brave enough to stop, it has been reported she will not speak, but only points to the spot where she last saw her children and beckons the stranger for help. As suddenly as she appears, she vanishes, leaving only a cold shiver down the spine of the witness to the ghostly apparition.

Several who have traveled Charleston Road late at night have also witnessed the glow of unearthly lights in the distance or along the roadside. No one is certain what these lights are, but we do know they are not the lights of vehicles or homesteads. Other sightings in and around Tombstone include apparitions in the Buford House, the Birdcage Theater, Nellie Cashman’s Restaurant and, of course, Boothill Cemetery. Bisbee is also home to many wandering spirits – perhaps most famous is that in the Copper Queen Hotel - but there have also been spectral sightings on Fort Huachuca. The oldest building on Post is

the Carleton House, built in 1880 as a hospital. Several spirits reportedly “live” there. More than one Military Policeman has reported being unnerved during nightly patrols by ghostly shadows moving around two other buildings on Post. First is the building now housing the Army Intelligence Museum, which was originally built in 1887 as the Post morgue. The second, known as the Hangman’s Warehouse, was built for the execution of convicted Soldiers. In addition, the Patagonia Market and Sierra Vista’s Daisy Mae’s Stronghold Restaurant are known to have poltergeist activity, including stock being moved and eerie, unexplainable noises.

Cochise County has inspired some talented people with its haunting and exciting past. In 1926, Cap Watts, an old ranch hand working on the Slaughter Ranch, befriended an impressionable young boy named Stan Jones. One day, as they paused to watch lightning streak across black thunderclouds, Watts told Jones the story of phantom cowboys, condemned to ride the sky, perpetually chasing the devil’s herd. Later, Jones used this tale as the basis for his song “Ghost Riders in the Sky.” An instant hit, the song has been recorded by a variety of artists, including Burl Ives, Johnny Cash, and The Sons of the Pioneers.¹

Yes, Cochise County, with its diverse, often violent, and storied past, has profoundly influenced its inhabitants, living and dead.

If I’ve whetted your appetite for more on our ‘spirited’ area, you won’t want to miss the annual BLM- and FSPR-sponsored Halloween Night Hike. This is a kid-friendly hike of two miles. But watch out! You never know what you’ll meet in the dark as you take this moonlit hike to Fairbank Cemetery, where more than a few spectral sightings have occurred over the years.

Thanks to Fred Bissonnette for his help in researching this article.

¹Ross, Loretta. “Echoes: Ghost riders in the sky.” Unexplained-mysteries.com.20 February 2006.

About the Author: Alice Hawker has lived in the Sierra Vista area off and on since 1976. She is a Member of the Friends of the San Pedro River.



Characters you might meet on our night hike to the Fairbank Cemetery
Photo by Dutch Nagle

If you have been in this area for even a couple years you have seen the changes to the open space – it’s shrinking!

My unscientific measure of change is the view east from Highway 92 by Carr Canyon Road. I recall the scene not too many years ago looking across the valley to the Mule Mountains as an open vista with barely a scattering of homes that were pretty hard to see. And the view at night presented hardly a glimmer of light on the ground. Now the view is, well, you’ve probably seen it.

My first memories of Arizona are from “Arizona Highways” magazine and slide shows my uncle sent from his family’s travels in the state. I never expected I would end up here, although when I did I already knew what to expect and the centerpiece of that vision was the vast open space and clear air. I suspect that open vistas were part of the attraction for most of us.

We’re fortunate to have the large areas of public lands surrounding us here in Southeastern Arizona, and the open space, scenic views and recreational opportunities they provide. The nearby San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area has more than 57 thousand acres of land along its south to north linear path. The San Pedro River has been described as a bird migratory corridor of hemispheric importance, as well as its many natural resource points of significance. It may only look like a long line of cottonwood trees, but at each bend in its course one can find something interesting to experience from animals to archaeology. Other public lands in our area include the many and diverse lands of the Coronado National Forest, Ft. Huachuca, Las Cienegas National Conservation Area, Coronado National Memorial, National Wildlife Service wildlife refuges, and Arizona State Park and Land Department Trust lands. We also have a mix of private ranch lands, including some large tracts like the Babocomari Ranch and the San Rafael Valley, the Nature Conservancy’s properties, and the Audubon Society’s Appleton-Whittle Research Ranch. Some of the latter properties connect directly with our public lands. The consequence of this mixture of private and public lands is that other than the occasional line of the border fence and paralleling roads, the views southward into Mexico from the top of Huachuca

Mountains westward make for images most Americans only see in old movies.

What stops Tucson from growing to north and east (and eventually to the south)? Generally, it is running up against the boundary of public lands. As the checkerboard development of private lands continues one thing has remained constant: our public lands remain open, no homes, and no lights at night. They keep us from looking like just another Tucson or Phoenix where, from an open space perspective, quality has long since been sacrificed for quantity.

We should all be thankful that nearly all of the higher mountain ranges in this part of the state are public lands. Imagine the upper slopes of the Huachucas covered with structures; it would just not be the kind of place most of us would find appealing. We might be building most everywhere else, but at least we can thank our public lands for keeping us in check. They make us ask how much growth is too much, and when does “progress” no longer represent something positive but instead becomes counter to the character of the land we love.

American citizens in the past saw fit to establish these protected lands. And because of their vision we get to enjoy them today. But they come with some responsibility -- we have to care for them, and see that they are handed down to future generations in good condition for them to enjoy. This responsibility involves staying informed and getting involved.

Maybe you are wondering, where you can fit in and what you can do to help preserve your public lands?

- Visit our area public lands; take a hike, look for birds, go hunting, enjoy the night sky, listen to the sounds
- Participate in the events held on the lands such as the annual National Public Lands Day in April
- Join a local stewardship organization like the Friends of the San Pedro River, Friends of the Huachuca Mountains, Sky Island Alliance, Southeast Arizona Bird Observatory, etc.
- Volunteer with the Bureau of Land Management at the San Pedro River, with the Coronado National Forest, the Coronado National Memorial or The Nature Conservancy, they always have jobs needing manpower and could use some help.

- Support public and private efforts to preserve open space as well as joint use of public lands
- Just go out and pick up some trash on your public lands and leave them better than you found them.

About the Author: Doug Snow is retired from the U.S. Army and member of the Friends of the San Pedro River.



Green Kingfisher Pond
Photo courtesy of BLM

Enjoy Your River

By Dutch Nagle

The San Pedro River, like the mighty Mississippi, “keeps on rolling along.” What it lacks in depth and width is made up for by its tenacity. By standards outside of the southwest, it wouldn’t be considered a river but rather a meandering stream. However, visit it after one of our monsoonal rains and marvel at the difference. Then our river is a rich brown swollen torrent, running high above its normal placid level, replete with surging trash and tree branches, often with small trees wrenched from a collapsed riverbank. It is a thrilling sight. After the floodwaters have subsided, visit and wonder at the flood-deposited debris in the trees above the level of your head. But, these are the exceptional times. For most of the year, the river corridor provides tranquility and serenity --- no blaring radios, no automobile horns, just natural sounds like the water flowing in the river, the breeze blowing through the trees, the birds singing, and even the chomping of the caterpillars in the spring time.

The San Pedro River is a super-highway for millions of migratory birds, and the summer home, winter home, and breeding ground for many others. The birds hang around the river because of the water and trees, which provide food, shelter, and nesting sites. Thus making it a Mecca for birds and birders alike. It is internationally known as one of the top ten birding hotspots in America. Most of the hummingbirds found in the canyons of the Huachuca Mountains have been seen here, plus more than 350 other bird species. Don’t expect to find all of them in one or two visits. Some are only occasional passers-by and many are seasonal. If you want to look at birds, but do not relish going alone, try one of our free bird walks.

Docents from Friends of the San Pedro River (FSPR) lead bird walks the second Sunday, the second Wednesday and the fourth Saturday of every month departing from the San Pedro House. Newly fledged birders are always welcome, and a spotting scope permits close up views of cooperative birds. The morning walks, each 3 - 3 ½ hour long, find an average of 40 species.

Another good way to see birds is to take a hike with our docents. FSPR schedules 10 hikes per year (there is a \$5 fee) that take you to different parts of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). For those who are not birders, the diversity of the

SPRNCA offers something for everyone. The history of human culture in the area goes back 13,000 years. From the mammoth hunters to the native Americans, to the Spanish, to the cowboys, right up until today. On the property there are ruins of a Spanish presidio, Indian rock-art sites, mammoth-kill sites, foundations of now defunct ore mills, ghost towns, old ranches, an old cemetery, as well as plants, animals, interesting geological formations, and beautiful scenery. You can experience going from a desert environment to a riparian environment within just a few steps. You can see and feel the change.

If you are not into hiking, how about a leisurely walk? FSPR offers free docent led walks around the San Pedro House every Saturday morning. These walks are about 1 1/2 miles long over easy terrain and take about 2 hours.

The FSPR has laid out a 'self guided trail' that can be followed anytime by individuals whose schedule does not coincide with our docent-led walks.

If you would prefer to ride, bring your horse or bicycle and enjoy the trails. (no motorized vehicles).

A research team engages in year round mist-netting of birds by the San Pedro House and the river. During the summer months the Southeastern Arizona Bird Observatory (SABO) invites the public to watch their weekly hummingbird banding sessions at the San Pedro House. The viewing opportunities are absolutely wonderful. Have you ever held a hummingbird in your hand?

While there, please visit the bookstore. It is nationally known for its fine selection of books and gift items.

About the Author: Dutch Nagle is a past president and member of the Friends of the San Pedro River



Walking group admiring the scenery along the river
Photo by Dutch Nagle

If you have lived in our community for any length of time, you are probably aware of the water-related concerns of the Upper San Pedro River sub-watershed. You likely understand that all the water we humans use here is pumped from the aquifer underlying our valley, and that water from this aquifer also provides most of the water needed by the riparian area found along the San Pedro River, the last free-flowing river remaining in the southwestern United States.

You've probably read articles about this issue in this paper, as well as articles on the Upper San Pedro Partnership's (USPP) efforts to balance the existing water overdraft in an effort to protect the San Pedro River and to protect Ft. Huachuca. Often cited in these articles are concerns about the potential impact of development, the water overdraft, and the drought. Explicitly or implicitly stated are concerns that if we don't act soon, the river may go the way of Tucson's Santa Cruz River or Phoenix's Salt River. We are often left with the impression that any negative impact to the river's health lies somewhere in the future, so there is still time to discuss all the factors and conduct more studies. The reality, however, is quite different. The San Pedro River is already on the same path as the Santa Cruz and Salt rivers.

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) protecting a roughly 44-mile length of the San Pedro River, from the border with Mexico to just south of Saint David. The underlying geology of this portion of the river results in both perennial and intermittent stretches (called reaches) of water. Perennial reaches generally have year-round surface water, while intermittent reaches usually lack surface flow during the late spring and early summer -- the hottest and driest time of year. It is these intermittent reaches that are most at risk when water levels fall, but in times past, there has been enough subsurface flow in the intermittent reaches to ensure that the river and riparian areas in this portion of the river have properly functioned. This is illustrated by the fact that both older trees and new seedling trees along the river have survived the late spring/early summer dry period, because their roots reach down to the subsurface flow even during the driest times.

In general, perennial reaches extend from the State Route 92 Bridge near Palominas to roughly the Charleston Bridge and, generally,

intermittent reaches exist north of Charleston Bridge. To assess the health of the river, BLM and The Nature Conservancy conduct an annual "River Monitoring" the third Saturday in June to determine exactly how much of the river has surface water at the driest time of the year. BLM also conducts periodic "Proper Functioning Condition" surveys to obtain a more detailed assessment of the condition of the river.

River Monitoring has been conducted since 1999. It involves teams of volunteers, equipped with maps and global-positioning systems, walking the length of the river in the SPRNCA and recording exactly where surface water is found. The results of this monitoring indicate that only approximately 50% of the river has surface water in late June. While this monitoring is too recent to note a trend, in July 2005 the Charleston gauge recorded its first ever "no water flow" event.

The Proper Functioning Condition surveys have been conducted since 1994 and involve a thorough assessment of river and riparian health. Once all the data are compiled, ratings are developed for the portions of the river assessed. Ratings are either "Properly Functioning," "Functional - at Risk," or "Non-functional." The latest results indicate that 22 miles of the river are Properly Functioning, 15 miles are Functional - at risk, and seven miles of the river are Non-functional. In areas where the river is Non-functional, native riparian trees like cottonwood and willow are dying or failing to establish new trees, and exotic (non-native) trees, like tamarisk, are starting to expand. Tamarisk is able to out-compete cottonwood and willows in areas where the water table is farther below the surface. The replacement of cottonwood and willow by tamarisk is an indicator of drying conditions. In these areas the river is essentially beginning the process of converting to a wash.

The bottom line of the monitoring and surveys is that portions of our river are already well into decline.

The purpose of this article is not to attribute blame for the decline in our river, but rather to ensure that everyone understands that the future of the river is already here. The decline of our river is not some academic concern of what might happen at some future date, but is occurring today. We have far less time to save our river than many realize. If your river's survival is important to you, learn more by visiting the USPP website at uspppartnership.com and contact your local officials to indicate your concern and to ask how you can help.

About the Author: Ted Mouras is a past president and a member of the Friends of the San Pedro River



View toward Charleston Bridge in 1988



View toward Charleston Bridge in 1998
Photos courtesy of BLM

Do You Believe In Beavers?

By Mike Foster

The beavers of the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA) really do exist, and I can personally attest to their presence. As unlikely as it may seem, there are a series of long-term active colonies along the San Pedro River reaching 25 miles north from the Mexican border to highway 82. Some of this beaver activity can be found only seven miles to the East of Sierra Vista. I know they exist because I have made weekly daylong hikes to the ponds for the last five years, but in all this time I have only clearly seen a beaver once in the daylight. I decided it was time for me to make a series of excursions to see if I could see more of these creatures. Beginning late this November I hiked and camped overnight on the riverbanks several times during the following month. I read that the beavers that were released in the SPRNCA in 1999 were mostly nocturnal. For this reason I planned many of my explorations during the night. My first visit was one pre-dawn morning during a cold snap. I hiked through the dark to the river. The cold air from the higher elevations had settled on the river valley and the temperature had fallen to eight degrees. I wondered whether the beavers might be in hibernation and I suspected that my efforts to see them would be in vain. As I arrived on the banks of one of the wide portions of the river known as a linear pond, I detected ripples in the water moving toward me from the distance. Through the weeds I then saw the streamlined wake of a beaver. I heard the rapid gnawing of another beaver on the opposite bank. As I stood there, thrilled yet motionless, the beaver swimming towards me gave a loud abrupt smack of its flat paddle-like tail on the surface of the water. The broad form of the beaver's hindquarters rose up just before it plunged below the surface. Then from the other direction I saw the wake of another beaver cutting across the pond. I heard another loud smack. The beavers that are nowhere to be seen in the day were now as the expression states -- busy as beavers. Beavers are one of the world's largest rodents and this busy scene reminded me of smaller busy rodents scurrying about for food in a cupboard at night.

Beavers make dams at advantageous spots where they can back up as much water as possible. Gnawed branches, twigs, mud, and rocks are used for their building materials. The dams I have witnessed on the San Pedro are generally from one to two-feet high. Some beavers

however merely take advantage of the deep water of the existing linear ponds and do not appear to form their own dams. The recent big summer floods damaged or destroyed many of last year's dams. Although lots of fresh evidence of beavers is apparent it wasn't until this January that I witnessed significant reinforcement of the existing dams.

The beavers live in bank lodges that are excavated along a steep riverbank with an entrance that ideally stays below the surface of the water. Most lodges seem to have air hole openings to the land as well. Be aware that many places along the banks are hollow due to the lodges and stepping into an air hole is a real hazard. An evening excursion could result in a broken leg. I believe many of the lodges have extensive underground networks and have witnessed air holes perhaps 35 feet away from the main lodge entrance. There may be a mat of sticks, twigs and mud to prevent access by bigger creatures in the above ground holes, while below the surface of the water another tangle of sticks and debris seem to be placed strategically to disguise the submarine entrance. A series of slides are formed around the lodge where beavers enter and exit the water. These slides provide them with access to the cottonwood trees and willows that they feed on. The slides are steep and high and one night while camping I could hear beavers plummeting off the steep slides into the water.

I view the reintroduction of the beaver as a wonderful connection to the river's past when it used to be called the Beaver River. The Bureau of Land Management's efforts to not only preserve but to enhance the riparian area is as exciting and as rewarding to me as planting a garden and watching it grow. This great effort to return the river to its original health is a project we can all watch with constructive hope. Imagine this valley as the first Europeans, Francisco Vázquez De Coronado or Padre Eusebio Kino, would have found it, vigorous, full of natural wonders and ready for exploring.



Beaver Dam on the San Pedro River

Photo by Dutch Nagle



Beaver on the San Pedro River

Photo by Dwight Long

About the Author: Mike Foster is videographer. He has produced several CDs on nature for the Friends of the San Pedro River and is a long time member of the Friends.

School Days Are Here Again!

By Jane Childress

School's been out since 1944! But at the end of this month, some former students of the Fairbank schoolhouse will return to the desks they abandoned 63 years ago. The Grand Opening of the Fairbank schoolhouse as an information center, museum, and gift shop will be held Saturday, March 31. The event will be open to the public and will include nature and history hikes, children's activities, and musical performances.

Fairbank was the eye of the storm in the wild Tombstone days. The San Pedro River wound its way between Fort Huachuca and Tombstone, attracting miners and millers, cattlemen and cowboys, builders and lumberjacks, barkeepers and drunks. The Wild West towns that sprung up included Charleston, the most notorious of all. Folks in Fairbank had a saying about "a slow boat from Charleston," meaning a dead body floating down the river. Contention's very name says struggle and violence. Tombstone's name speaks most strongly of all. And then there is Fairbank, a name that says relax. Sure, there were fights, after all Fairbank did have one bar, in the Montezuma Hotel. The other towns all had many saloons and associated businesses - Charleston had at least 20 in its heyday! Fairbank's only famous violent act was the attempted train robbery on February 15, 1900. Foiled by ex-Texas ranger Jeff Milton, the gang included lawman-criminal Burt Alvord and Three-fingered Jack Dunlap.

Mother Nature wreaked violence on all of the towns along the river, and the flooding of Walnut Gulch (also called Tombstone Creek) in 1887 destroyed parts of Fairbank. Then there was the earthquake in 1897, which devastated houses and knocked the railroad tracks out of whack in places.

Four different railroads, two or three-stage companies and many businesses made Fairbank a transportation hub. Over time, train service dwindled to one line, but the highway was here by then and Fairbank lived on, though gradually dying. The school was closed in 1944 and by about 1974 the last few of its residents closed the store and moved away. The buildings fell into deeper disrepair and the weeds and trees took over.

In 1986, through a land exchange, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) acquired Fairbank along with the rest of the river

corridor, which in 1988 became the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area. It was immediately clear that lots of money would be needed to properly care for the old buildings. Stabilization efforts by BLM began on a shoestring budget, and slowly, funds were secured for the effort. One of the more significant sources of money was a Federal Highway Administration Enhancement Grant awarded in 1997. Before any actual work could be done, plans had to be formulated and environmental analysis conducted. Under the old townsite lies another, older townsite that had to be considered and handled with care.

Restoration of old buildings is painstaking and historic preservation specialists are required to follow guidelines established by the Secretary of the Interior. Every small detail requires a great deal of consideration and any changes to the original buildings' materials are avoided unless there is no other choice. The old Schoolhouse at Fairbank was chosen for restoration because it didn't have any serious structural failings. Work began at the foundation, which was bolstered by concrete footings. Metal rods were placed within the walls to help keep it strong and upright. The roof was completely removed, repaired and then replaced. The inside of the building had to be thoroughly cleaned with bleach, because of bat and rodent droppings. The ceiling was so contaminated that it had to be removed and disposed of as hazardous material! The smell was terrible!

Once these larger issues were resolved, the work on the interior began. Since it had to have a new ceiling, insulation was added. This change will never be visible and will help keep the place comfortable in the winter. The windows were in various states of disrepair, so they were either repaired when possible, or replicated. The doors were replicated using the old doors that were stashed away. In historic preservation, even if an item is too poor to use, it is kept anyway so an accurate replica can be made.

The original blackboards were long gone so the search was on for replacements. Luckily, the Lowell School in Bisbee was replacing the old slate boards with dry-erase boards, and they generously donated them. The old oak tongue-in-groove floor was a terrible sight but with sanding, the beauty of the wood was clearly visible, and a few coats of polyurethane have really made it shine!

There's much more to tell, but you can come and see it for yourself on March 31, 2007. The Friends of the San Pedro River will

manage the Schoolhouse information center and store and it will be open Friday-Sunday from 9:30 -4:30.



Fairbank Schoolhouse, circa 1935

Photo courtesy of BLM

About the Author: Jane Childress is an Archaeologist with BLM.

Bird Migration

By Alan Blixt

As you read this article there are many millions of birds migrating from one place to another all over the world. Fortunately for us, the San Pedro River Valley is a major north-south corridor for migrating birds in the southwestern United States. The Bureau of Land Management estimates that between five and twelve (12) million birds traverse this migration corridor each year. In the springtime birds wintering here, such as raptors, sparrows and waterfowl, head back north for their breeding season. Other birds, such as warblers, hummingbirds, and shorebirds pass through here from their wintering grounds south of us to their breeding grounds in the north, while many species of neo-tropical songbirds stop here to nest.

The first breeding birds to arrive are generally the males. They begin to establish territories looking for areas with good food, water, and cover. They travel around their territories singing their delightful songs and displaying their beautiful colors to warn off other males and to attract a mate for the breeding season. The females arrive later and work the river looking for the male with the best song, most attractive coloration, and the best territory. They then pair up for the season to raise their young.

Migration is both difficult and dangerous. Take, for example, the Rufous Hummingbird. This tiny bird winters in central Mexico along with thousands of other birds. In the springtime it travels as far north as Alaska for the breeding season. (It is 3751 miles from Mexico City to Anchorage Alaska, a long trip for a bird that weighs a little more than a penny.) Up north the bird finds open space with less competition for resources from other birds. As the snow melts, populations of mosquitoes and other insects soar and flowers dot the landscape. Hummingbirds require both nectar and insects in their diet and they find both in abundance. And, in the land of the midnight sun, the birds can feed their young almost twenty-four hours a day. The males leave the breeding area first and the females follow after they have fledged their young. So how do the young find their way to the wintering grounds? Migrants use landmarks, day-length, magnetic fields, sun and moon locations, and other resources to find their way to their wintering grounds but the young have never migrated before. According to Scott

Weidensaul in LIVING ON THE WIND it must be programmed into their DNA. But, maybe, it's just another wonder of the bird world!

Another long-distance migrant travels very differently.

Swainson's Hawks gather in the fall in large groups called kettles and fly south together. Swainson's Hawks breed over a large part of western North America and winter in Argentina. They fly together in large groups seeking altitudes that provide the most favorable winds. When they leave Argentina in the spring and begin to arrive in our area, a new breeding season has begun. Say "Welcome back" when you see the Swainson's Hawks this spring.

Birds that are beautiful, easy to see, and fun to watch at San Pedro House are the lovely Barn Swallows. They build several nests under the eaves of the house and are often seen feeding their young. They eat lots of insects and breed several times throughout the summer season.

The last weekend of February a male Vermilion Flycatcher was seen on the San Pedro River. The first week of March five males were seen. The next weekend 12 males and two pairs were seen. The middle of March heralded the arrival of several male Yellow Warblers. Soon other birds such as Summer Tanager, Bullock's Oriole, Blue Grosbeak, Cassin's and Western Kingbird, Yellow-breasted Chat, Ash-throated and Brown-Crested Flycatcher, and Black-chinned Hummingbird will be arriving to breed and nest on the conservation area. Numerous other warblers and songbirds will stop on their way north to enjoy some cover, a little rest, a drink, and a little nourishment before they continue their journey. Our latest migrant, the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, arrives in late May and early June after making the long trip from central South America.

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area is a treasure and is owned by all of us. This is your land. Please take some time and enjoy it. As you walk along the San Pedro River in the springtime you will hear the lovely songs and see the colorful birds. The Friends of the San Pedro River offer interpretive walks and bird walks that are free to the public to help you identify and learn about our animals and plants. We also conduct songbird banding and hummingbird banding sessions to educate the public and to promote conservation awareness. Visit our website at www.sanpedroriver.org to check times and

dates.....Please....come take a walk with us, come share the experience with us.



One of our most popular migratory birds, a Vermilion Flycatcher
Photo by Dwight Long

About the Author: Alan Blixt is a former member of the Board of Directors and a docent for the Friends of the San Pedro River.

As the season changes to summer and the days grow warmer, its time to think about ways to spend time outdoors but out of the sun. How about a beautiful, shaded creek full of birds, a spring, and even some historical ruins?

Take a short drive out Charleston Road and turn right on Escapule Road. In just a quarter of a mile, Escapule Wash crosses the road. Park alongside the roadway and walk east along the wash. After the first few hundred yards of sand and creek bank, there is a spring. In high summer the spring may be only a few drops of water, but most of the year it will be a cooling trickle or even a steady flow. The wet sand below the spring is often full of animal tracks – deer, javelina, coyote (perhaps another hiker brought his dog so you can learn to identify the difference in the two types of canid tracks). Watch the large Fremont Cottonwoods and the smaller Goodding Willows near the spring for Northern Beardless Tyrannulets, Gila Woodpeckers, and Brown-crested Flycatchers.

The wash continues for about a half mile to the San Pedro River. Along the way, listen for the call of the Gray Hawk, spot the bright, easily recognized Vermilion Flycatcher dashing from an overhanging branch to catch an insect and returning again and again to the same perch. This stretch of the river is also good for Black and Say's Phoebes and (in spring and summer) the bright red Summer Tanager.

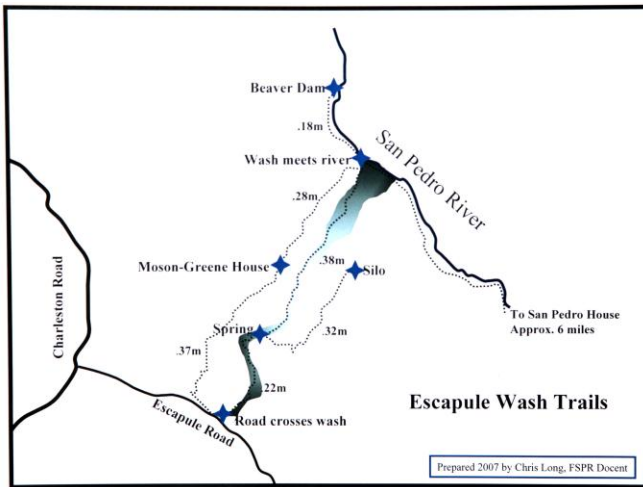
Where the wash meets the river, head north and, if you are lucky, you will find an active beaver dam. These busy engineers are slowing the water flow and helping the river maintain a year-round water level. Look for a recently downed tree and see the scars of beaver incisors on the neatly chewed stump. If you are there in the very early morning or later evening you might even get to see a beaver.

More interested in history than in nature or bird watching? Climb up the south bank of the wash near the spring. The trail is rugged, but the uphill stretch is only 100 feet or so. The trail above the wash is not shaded, so be careful on a hot day. On the east end of the ridge is a silo from the early ranching days in our San Pedro Valley. It is adobe block mortared with concrete. A dam had been built in the late 1800s by a previous owner, which allowed Ella to have a water supply

for her gardens, and to grow cattle feed. It is assumed that the silo was used to store fodder for the winter season.

On the North side of the wash, almost opposite the silo (there is a trail leading back from the intersection of the wash with the river) are the remains of the Moson House. This house was built about 1920 by Frank Moson. Legend has it that the house was set ablaze during the “range wars” but there is no proof of this.

The walk is not too long, about four miles round-trip, and is less visited than most areas of the SPRNCA which makes it even more interesting.



San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area, Escapule Wash.

This map shows the unimproved, but well worn paths to the historical sites in the Escapule Wash area

Map developed by Dwight Long

About the Author: Chris Long is a past president and docent for the Friends of the San Pedro River

San Pedro River Monitoring By Sandy and Betsy Kunzer

Data! Not opinion. Not guesses or memories. Facts. This is the goal of the river monitoring within the upper San Pedro River watershed in the San Pedro Riparian Conservation Area (SPRNCA) and some interspersed private lands. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and citizen scientists, has conducted this monitoring each June since 1999. Each year we have surveyed the river near the hottest, driest time of year – usually the third Saturday in June - in an attempt to develop a better understanding of the lowest or base flow of our river over an extended period of time. While point gages on the river give us continual readings and have been operating for a number of years (91 years of records for the Charleston gage and 69 years of records for the Palominas gage) the monitoring of the surface flow along an entire stretch on a single day can provide both complementary and, with more and more years of record, more comprehensive data to help determine the long-term health of the San Pedro River. In addition, the effort in this sub-watershed is now being used as a model to extend the effort downstream past Benson so that even more information about a longer portion of the river will be gathered.

We conduct the monitoring by dividing the river into sections, then teams of volunteers walk or ride horseback along the banks or even in the river. Each of our teams includes at least one experienced BLM or TNC staff member and carries a map of his or her section of the river, a clipboard with data sheets and pencils, a recording GPS unit, marker tape and flags, a First Aid kit and safety and communications equipment for use in case of emergency. Each team's section is generally about five miles long if done on foot or about 10 miles if it is ridden on horseback. Using recording Global Positioning System (GPS) units which are all set to the same mapping protocol, the volunteers determine where there is at least 30 linear feet of surface water and using the GPS units record on the provided map, on the data sheets and in the memory of the GPS unit where the surface water starts and stops. To keep the data consistent from team to team and year to year, a protocol is used that spells out what to do with short, long and/or interrupted wet or dry stretches. We teach this protocol each year at the training session so that we remind previous volunteers and teach

newcomers. At the end of the survey day, all teams turn in their GPS units, maps and data sheets.

The individual GPS points are entered into a mapping program to produce a yearly map showing the stretches with and without surface water and allow multi-year comparison of the year's surface flow and changes over time. The written data sheets are used to check any "outlying" GPS points or in case the GPS unit memory is lost in some way. While the data from one year are interesting, it is the compilation of many years of data that can really help us define the trends and stresses our river is experiencing. It is also our hope that by expanding the amount of the river that is surveyed each year, a clearer picture will emerge.

Since 1999 surface flow varied from about 46% of the monitored length in 2000 and 2006 to about 76% in 2001 (the spring following the heavy rains of October 2000). The north end of the SPRNCA is consistently dry and this probably indicates that during the hottest driest times of the year, the river corridor vegetation in this area is under stress from lack of water.



Dave Weigel taking a GPS reading along a dry stretch of the San Pedro River

Photo by Edna Weigel

About the Author: Sandy and Betsy are retired geologist and physical scientist respectively. They are active volunteers for the Friends of the San Pedro River.

The San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA), which encompasses an over 40-mile-long section of the San Pedro River with approximately one mile on each side of it, provides a wonderful environment for people to hike, walk, bike-ride, jog, picnic, hunt, fish and horse-back ride. It is also an invaluable habitat for 80 mammal species, plus 40 species of reptiles and amphibians. Over 350 species of birds have been identified within the SPRNCA and over 100 species are known to breed here. The Fremont cottonwood-Goodding willow forest that lines the banks of the river is one of the most insect-productive forest types in the United States. The mesquite woodlands, sacaton grassland, marshland, and various shrublands add to the biodiversity within the SPRNCA. This richness of habitat and the river's precious water, help fuel the journeys of the migratory birds that use the SPRNCA each year. (It is believed that nearly one-quarter of the birds in North America, at least once during their lifespan, will visit the San Pedro River).

Millions of birds that winter in Mexico and Central and South America take advantage of the San Pedro's food, shelter, and water on their journeys to and from nesting grounds in the western United States and Canada. The river, a bright green "oasis in a desert" environment, is like a highway with numerous rest stops, where migrants can rest and refuel. (Not much different from us when we take a long trip and stop to eat and drink and put gas in the car.) The San Pedro River is the only relatively in-tact green-belt linking the subtropics of Mexico to the temperate regions of western North America between the Colorado River and the Rio Grande, a 700 mile expanse. Without this critical stopover area, birds would find this journey very difficult indeed.

Birds play an important role in nature. Hummingbirds pollinate flowering plants; hawks and some other birds prey on rodents; seed eaters pass some seed through their digestive systems and deposit them, in their own little fertilizer packet, in other locations; and most birds eat insects at some time in their lives. Birds also become food for other animals including humans.

Migrating birds face natural perils such as storms, predation, and drought. They must also contend with ever increasing human caused threats including wires; windows; loss of suitable habitat

through timber harvesting, urbanization, grazing, and farming; and contamination from pesticides, (researchers estimate that each year, at least 67 million birds die from pesticides used on American farms.) If birds lose the vital migration corridor of the San Pedro River, this will just compound the challenges they face. This would be much more than just the loss of pretty birds. It could well be a major international environmental disaster because approximately 40% of all western North American birds pass through here, thus affecting the pollination, seed dissemination, rodent-control, and bug-control for all of western US and Canada. It would also impact Mexico and Central and South America, who would lose those same birds.

From a purely economic standpoint, the great diversity of birds found in Arizona attracts many thousands of birdwatchers each year, pumping millions of dollars into the state's economy. A study published in 2002 by the University of Arizona showed that the annual increase in local economic output for 1 year, that is attributable to visitors to Ramsey Canyon and the San Pedro River, ranged from \$17 to \$28.3 million. More recent studies have pushed that figure to over \$30 million.

We are currently using about 10,000 acre feet of water per year more than is being put back into the aquifer. The affect of this deficit is cumulative and is resulting in a reduced flow of water in the San Pedro River. The river is already showing the affects of this reduced flow in the northern portions of the SPRNCA where the river is quite simply no longer properly functioning. This is happening even though we still have hundreds of years' supply of groundwater because the river's survival is largely based on the water in the top of the aquifer.

The Upper San Pedro Partnership (USPP) is charged with the responsibility of reaching "sustainable yield" by 2011. If we can reach this goal of balancing the water deficit and continue to do so in the future, our descendants and our birds' descendants will be able to enjoy the river just as we do today. If we fail, then we can expect to see longer and longer stretches of the river begin to fail.

I hope that I have helped to convince you that the river is very important not only to birds, but also to humans. Everything in nature is interconnected and that includes you and me.

About the Author: Dutch Nagle is a past president and docent for the Friends of the San Pedro River



A group of people enjoying a docent-led bird walk near the San Pedro House

Photo courtesy Friends of the San Pedro River



Friends of the San Pedro River, Inc.
1763 Paseo San Luis
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635
(520) 459-2555
www.sanpedroriver.org