



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 5 Issue 6

February 2004

Tres Rios Festival: A Celebration of Habitat and Heritage

By Tom Hildebrandt and Daniela Yellan

Celebrating the Natural History and Heritage of the South West Valley! That's the theme of this year's first annual Arizona Public Service Tres Rios Nature Festival, March 13-14, 2004, at Estrella Mountain Regional Park in Good-year, AZ. Your Sonoran Audubon Chapter has been an integral partner in developing this event since its inception. With this note, we want to invite you to join us for the festival, as a guest, as a participant or both.

The Gila system west of Phoenix is a scene of abundant bird life! Both the Tres Rios and Gila River Christmas Bird Counts center themselves in this area. A rich fish fauna in the river produce an abundance of fish-eating birds such as herons, egrets, cormorants, osprey and kingfisher. The riparian woodlands are similarly rich in land birds, mammals and all sorts of other critters. This area is also, however, the scene of some of the metro area's fastest urban development and many of the newcomers know very little about this wonderful place. The festival hopes to change that by creating and encouraging a concern, determination, and enthusiasm to see these rich values maintained and preserved.

Conceived then as a mechanism to better showcase these rich wildlife and riparian habitats, this event is targeted at both the local general community and at serious nature lovers. Offering a mix of family activities and specialty tours and lectures, there will be something for everyone! From a hands-on "Learning Zone" with educational exhibits and demonstrations, to beginning birding classes, general interest and specialty lectures, riparian nature tours, a fishing clinic, free-flight falconry demonstrations, and canoe trips on the Gila. There will also be food, entertainment, many non-profit exhibitors like Liberty Wildlife and the Arizona Native Plant Society, artists and other vendors. Another highlight will be the dedication of a new burrowing owl artificial habitat structure and the release of some owls during the event.

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At our next meeting....

February 11, 2004

Tom Jones, Grand Canyon University,

"Mired in the Mud: A Look at Neotropic Rainforest Amphibians and Reptiles"



Two female Green-crowned Brilliants, Monteverde, Costa Rica.

Tom Jones is Professor and Chair of the Department of Biology at Grand Canyon University, where he has been for about 9 years. His research interests primarily focus on ecology and organismal biology, and with his students he studies sand dune plants, tropical pit vipers and several Sonoran Desert amphibians and reptiles. Tom received his BS and MS at Auburn University in Alabama, and after spending seven weeks in a field class that traveled throughout the American West during his junior year in college, he was convinced he would settle in the Southwest. When the opportunity arrived, Tom moved to Arizona to do his PhD at Arizona State University. He has taught at the University of Michigan Biological Station and at East Carolina University. Tom is also on the Board of Directors of Sonoran Audubon Society.

Tom has always felt that extended field experiences are critical to the development of students of organismal biology and ecology, and five years ago, he began teaching Neotropical Herpetology (the study of amphibians and reptiles) at the Bocas del Toro Biological Station in Bocas del Toro, Panamá.

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"Mired in the Mud: A Look at Neotropic Rainforest Amphibians and Reptiles"

The Station is run by the Institute for Tropical Ecology and Conservation, in Gainesville, FL. Tom has also traveled in Costa Rica, as a biologist/tour leader on National Geographic Family Adventures.

In his talk, Tom will present an overview of some of the amphibians and reptiles he has encountered in his travels in Panamá and Costa Rica, as well as some of the other more interesting plants and animals. The photograph above, although clearly not an amphibian or reptile, was chosen over a photograph of a snake, just to encourage more members of Sonoran Audubon Society to attend....

I hope that many of you can attend the program this month. Tom Jones gave in earlier program on the desert Ajo Lily which many of found fascinating. We are very fortunate to have such a talented person on our board who is able to present such interesting programs for us.

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Tres Ríos Festival: A Celebration of Habitat and Heritage

As another special treat this year, the Arizona Riparian Council (<http://azriparian.asu.edu>) is pairing up with our festival and holding its annual spring meeting nearby at Estrella Mountain Community College on Friday March 12th. Please visit their web site also and register for the symposium on "The Gila River: Then and Now" The Council will be one of our exhibitors on Saturday and Sunday and will assist with our riparian tours.

Visit the festival web site (www.tresriosnaturefestival.com) for more information on the special lectures and tours that require pre-registration and small additional fees. Some of our special presenters include Kenn Kaufman (Sparrow ID), Pinau Merlin (Hummingbird ID), Doug Von Gausig (Bird Song/Call ID), and Troy Corman (AZ Shorebird ID). Use the on-line registration form to sign up for our lectures and limited enrollment canoe tours along the Gila.

If you have not already done so and wish to volunteer to help on the days of the festival, contact either Daniela Yellan, (dyellan@aol.com, 602-942-7791) or Tom Hildebrandt (thildebrandt@gf.state.az.us).

TREASURER'S REPORT, February 1, 2004

	Budgeted	Actual
INCOME		
NAS dues return	\$ 1,000.00	\$2,142.75
Chapter Sources	4,300.00 ^a	3,490.42
Friends of SAS	0.00	2,651.00
Other Chapter	3,500.00	839.42
Projects	0.00	2,422.00
Binoculars	0.00	520.00
Texas Trip Deposits	0.00	1,650.00
Other Projects	0.00	252.00
TOTAL	\$ 5,300.00	\$8,055.17

EXPENDITURES

Fund-raising	\$ 200.00	\$ 104.94
Committees	1,480.00	754.76
<i>Gambel's Tales</i>	800.00	613.89
Other Committees	680.00	140.87
Projects	800.00 ^a	875.02
Binoculars	800.00 ^a	800.00
Other Projects	0.00	75.02
Operations	1,320.00	933.87
Insurance	1,500.00	356.00
TOTAL	\$ 5,300.00	\$ 3,024.59

CHANGE IN CASH \$5,030.58

SCHEDULE OF CHANGES IN CASH

On hand, June 1, 2003	\$ 9,630.13
On hand, October 16, 2002	<u>14,660.71</u>
CHANGE IN CASH	\$ 5,030.58

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Balance, checking account	\$ 6,328.36
Balance, savings account	<u>8,332.53</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 14,660.89
Encumbered	<u>2,261.16</u>
CLEAR FUNDS	\$ 12,399.75

Note: a = funds added to original budget by action of the Board to cover the purchase of binoculars for the Tres Rios Festival and for resale.

Under the Bylaws and subsequent actions of the Board this Treasurer's Report appears in *Gambel's Tales* three times a year.

Any questions including requests for more details may be submitted to me at:

josh_a_burns@yahoo.com

Or Josh Burns

4045 East Earll Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85018-7143

A message from your president...

Last month I asked that when you are approached by a member of the nominating committee please give it serious reflection. I said further that we want to continue to keep striving forward from our start of four years ago. I haven't had a report from the nominating committee yet but I expect to have one soon. From what I can gather we have most of the slots filled. It looks like we will have a complete board ready to take over from the old one at the beginning of our new fiscal year starting June 1, 2004. You will have a chance to elect the board at the meeting in April. The nominations will be sent out with the March newsletter. The board is also proposing several changes to the chapter's bylaws. This is an ongoing project. As time passes we find that changes to the bylaws are necessary. We thought that changes would be necessary when we wrote the original bylaws.

When we started our chapter our membership felt strongly that board term limits should be mandatory. They were thus inserted in the bylaws. Other chapters don't have term limits and I've been told that it wasn't possible to have them. I think we should be proud that we not only have term limits but we are able to function with them in place

I also asked the nominating committee to find a new newsletter editor. I have been the president and the newsletter editor for the last two years and I feel that I need to be relieved of both positions so I can handle a new job with the chapter with much less stress. I will also be able to handle the new job much more efficiently.

SAS Web Site: www.sonoranaudubon.org

Join the National Audubon Society

New adult or family membership: \$20.00

Seniors and students: \$15.00

Renewal fee for seniors and students: \$15.00

These fees cover membership in the National Audubon Society and a subscription to Audubon magazine. An application form for National membership may be obtained from the chapter at the regular meeting or by contacting <chuckkan@mindspring.com>.

Each year all National members in the Sonoran Audubon chapter area receive the September *Gambel's Tales* that describes major chapter activities for the year. All monthly issues of *Gambel's Tales* may be obtained free from the chapter website <www.sonoranaudubon.org> or by mail for \$10.00 per year. If you wish to get the newsletter by mail or to be notified when a new issue is placed on the website, please contact chuckkan@mindspring.com or by mail to: Sonoran Audubon Society P O Box 8068 Glendale, AZ 85312-8068

Sonoran Audubon Society Officers & Board Members

President Charles Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

Vice-President Robert McCormick 602-237-3951 mcbobaz@aol.com

Treasurer Josh Burns 602-468-3002 josh_a_burns@yahoo.com

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Board Members at Large

Dwayne Fink 480-967-9202 edna.fink@asu.edu

Tom Jones 602-861-1217 trjones@grand-canyon.edu

Tom Lazzelle 602-843-8451 lazzelle.tom@ev.state.az.us

Jim Leonhardt 602-938-0979 deajimphx@cs.com

Dan Bohlmann 602-938-2881 dans.bohlmann@prodigy.net

Committee Contacts

Programs Andrée Tarby 480-948-1074 atarby@cox.net

Education Any volunteers?

Field Trips Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639 ercamp@juno.com

Finance Josh Burns 602-468-3002 josh_a_burns@yahoo.com

Hospitality Jim Leonhardt 602-938-0979 deajimphx@cs.com

Membership Dwayne Fink 480-967-9202 edna.fink@asu.edu

Newsletter Charles Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

The following sign was prepared by Jak Keyser, one of our talented members, and will be displayed at our meeting refreshment table:



Thank you Trader Joe's, and Fry's Marketplace for your generosity.

Newsletter Articles

We have members who submit articles for the newsletter. I want them to know that I haven't ignored them. I try to fit them in the newsletter whenever possible.

Ann McDermott wrote a very interesting article about her experience in a Christmas count in northern Arizona. It will be in next month's newsletter so you can share her experience.

Sonoran Audubon Society Great Back Yard Bird Count

Feb 13 – 16, 2004

In conjunction with the Audubon Great Back Yard Bird Count

PARTICIPATING IS EASY!

Join us at the Sonoran Audubon Society to find out who has the best yard in the West Valley for watching birds. Any residence west of Central Avenue is eligible to participate. This contest runs in conjunction with the Great Back Yard Bird Count and has the same rules with the exception that you can only count those birds seen from your yard.

Here's what you do:

Count the birds seen from your yard on one or all four count days. Just make sure to keep separate records and fill out a checklist for each day. Watch the birds for at least 15 minutes on each day that you participate. We recommend watching for a half-hour or more, so that you'll have a good sense of what birds are in your area. Observations made at various times on the same day can be put on the same checklist.

How to count:

It is very important that everyone count their birds in exactly the same way.

For each kind (species) of bird that you see, keep track of the highest number of individuals that you observe at any one time. Use a "Tally Sheet" to help keep track of your counts. Your tally sheet should look something like the following:

House Finch - 3, 5, 3, 1

Inca Dove - 1, 3, 6, 2

High Count = 5

High Count = 6

Be careful not to count the same bird over and over! Don't add another Inca Dove to your tally every time you see an Inca Dove at the feeder. You could be seeing the same individual again and again. If you record only the highest number of individual birds that you see in view at one time, you're sure to never count the same bird more than once!

You can submit one bird checklist for each day that you count.

Prizes will be awarded for the following

Grand Prize Trophy "West Valley's Best Yard for Birds" – Most species observed

"I wouldn't want to park my car here!" award - Highest total number of birds

"What the heck was that?" award - Most unusual species (as determined by the Sonoran Audubon Board)

Email your list to mcbobaz@aol.com with the subject "Best Yard for Birds" – or –

Mail to Sonoran Audubon Society P.O. Box 6068

Glendale AZ 85312-6068

Must be postmarked by February 25, 2004

You can participate in both the National Audubon Great Backyard Bird Count and the Sonoran Audubon Great Backyard Bird Count.



Peach-faced Lovebird
Photo by Greg Clark

It was a great day for birding: slightly overcast, invigoratingly cool, calm, and the birds were waiting for us. Fifteen of us from Sonoran Audubon and Birders' Anonymous were ready for them. We even picked up a couple strays (birders) as we went along. It was sort of a coming out birding trip for Jan Pipes. She found out that she could keep up with the rest of us. Turned out this was our birthday present to her. One grand lady.

We saw 39 species: lots of ducks and shore birds, four species of hawks, plus most of the year-round residents. Everyone fell in love with the Burrowing Owls – which now own the artificial underground homes built just for them. The best bird by acclamation were the Peach-faced Lovebirds. It was a new bird for some. Pretty hard to come with one for that bunch of pros. Today's darlings; tomorrows Starlings?

In case you don't know, the Water Ranch was created to reclaim sewage water. There are numerous recharge basins surrounded by easy-access trails. The landscaping is native, and easy to look over and/or through. It sure beats dumping all that precious water on golf courses.

What Dwayne didn't say in his trip report was he was the trip leader. The Gilbert Water Ranch is one of Dwayne's favorite places to bird.

The Peach-faced Lovebird originates in Africa and is a popular cage bird in the United States. The Lovebird has escaped from its owners in the Phoenix area and has spread to many parts of the valley. That was the reason for Dwayne's remark: Today's darlings; tomorrows Starlings?

In our last three field trips we have had new people. It's great to see more of our members starting to come out to our field trips. Welcome!

Winter and Spring 2004 Field Trips

Sonoran Audubon strongly encourages carpooling on all outings!

Please organize your own carpool, consolidate vehicles at meeting places, and/or contact leaders for carpooling assistance. Sonoran Audubon strongly encourages carpooling on all outings!

Field Trips are rated in difficulty levels one, the easiest, to five, the most difficult. It is recommended that passengers reimburse drivers at an agreed rate.

REMINDERS: Don't forget water, sunscreen, hats and insect repellent. Wear neutral colors. Avoid bright colors. Wear sturdy walking shoes

Saturday, February 7, 2004

Tres Rios Wetlands

Leaders: Loretta and Chuck Richards 623-594-6554

carichards@nowonline.net

Tres Rios Wetlands Project located at the 91st Ave. Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Salt River is a haven for many bird species. Habitats include open water, running stream, marsh, desert, and woods which provide environments for a variety of ducks, shorebirds, and residents at any time of year. On the last field trip there Orange-crowned Warblers were plentiful. A Least Bittern and an Osprey were among the 40 species seen. On their latest visit the leaders saw 17 American White Pelicans.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only.

Meet at Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City to LEAVE at 7:00 a.m. or call leaders for additional meeting places.

Thursday, February 19, 2004

Arlington Valley

Leaders: Joan and Dean Luehrs 623 875-1016 luehrs1@mindspring.com

Arlington Valley west of Phoenix and Buckeye and south of Arlington with fields, ponds, canals, a dam and desert is a good place to search for birds. On the fall field trip to the area 77 Sandhill Cranes were seen. There were American White Pelicans, a Brown Pelican, Snow Goose, White-faced Ibis, Long-billed Dowitcher, Horned Lark, American Pipit, and American Avocets among the 50 species seen. Troy Corman has recently seen the White Ibis and Glaucous-winged Gull in the Arlington area.

Difficulty: 1 Bring Lunch.

Meet at the Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City at 7:30 a.m.

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Winter and Spring 2004 Field Trips

The number of cars to caravan will be limited so PLEASE call the leaders to register.

Saturday, February 28, 2004

White Tanks Regional Park

Leader: Dan Bohlmann 602 938-8244

dans..bohlmann@prodigy.net

This trip will begin with a ½ mile trek to the waterfall site with hopes that during the wettest month of the year water will be coming over the falls and making small ponds in the creek which attract migrants. Seen at this time of year are warblers, Western Bluebirds, Lesser and Lawrence's Goldfinches and Cassin's Finch. Then the focus will be the one mile Ironwood Loop Trail and the adjacent deep wash where Verdins, woodpeckers (Gila, Ladder-backed, Hairy), gnatcatchers, hummingbirds and Rock and Canyon Wrens are often seen as well as the desert community birds: Curve-billed Thrasher, Cactus Wren, Black-throated Sparrow, Phainopepla, flycatchers, and towhees. Northern Cardinal, Loggerhead Shrike, and American Kestrel are possibilities also.

Difficulty: 2 Bring Lunch

There is a \$5.00 per car entrance fee. Meet at Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City at 7:30 a.m.

Saturday & Sunday March 13 & 14

Tres Rios Nature Festival

Estrella Mountain Regional Park, Goodyear

623-932-3811

(link to the site-www.maricopa.gov/parks/estrella)

Tres Rios Festival is an opportunity for everyone in the family to celebrate the rich wildlife and ecology in the Gila, Salt and Agua Fria River valleys. There will be educational programs and tours throughout the weekend. Wildlife enthusiasts and Birders can attend in-depth classes and children will have hands-on crafts plus up-close encounters with live animals. Vendors will provide food. Sonoran Audubon Society will have a booth!

Saturday & Sunday 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

\$10.00 per car

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Granite Reef Dam/Coon Bluff

Leader: Betty Baugus 623 412-1215

betty-baugus@webtv.net

These sites on the Salt River in the Tonto National Forest provide good habitat for ducks, herons, hawks and Bald Eagles. The mesquite riparian area is home to wrens, woodpeckers, phoebes, juncos, and sparrows as well as flycatchers---even in winter.

Difficulty: 1 Bring lunch and spotting scope.

Meet at Bell Recreation Center on Hutton Drive one block south of Bell Road in Sun City to LEAVE at 7:00 a.m. Call the leader for directions for meeting farther east and for details.

Wednesday, April 7, 2004

Badger Springs, Agua Fria Monument

Leader: George Wall 623 875-7057

WALLABY@worldnet.att.net

Badger Springs site in the Agua Fria National Monument is combination of desert and riparian areas offering a good place for a variety of birds. There is running water in the Agua Fria River and a cottonwood grove provides shade. The scenery is spectacular and Petroglyphs on the rocks above the stream enhance the experience of trekking this corridor where native Americans survived hundreds of years ago. Rock Wren, Canyon Wren, and gnatcatchers are common. Early migrants are possible.

Difficulty: 1 Bring lunch.

Meet at Bell Recreation Center, SW corner (Boswell and Hutton Dr. one block south of Bell Rd.) in Sun City to LEAVE at 6:30 a.m. Call the leader for additional meeting places, directions and details.

Saturday, April 24, 2004

Beginning Birder Class

Leaders: Bob McCormick McBobAZ@aol.com

and Eleanor Campbell ercamp@juno.com

We will be conducting a beginning birder class at the Thunderbird Park picnic area and the nearby Heritage Fund Pond. We will be covering the birding basics; identification, books, binoculars, etc. The first part of the class will cover the desert birds at the park and then we will move over to the pond to view the ducks and herons. The last class in November 2003 had 38 species.

Difficulty: 1 Morning Only ARRIVE at 8:00 a.m. at the south end of the Thunderbird Park picnic area. We will be at one of the pagodas near the restrooms. This regional park is located about 1 ½ miles North of the loop 101 on 59th Ave. Plan on about 3 hours of birding.

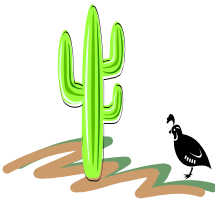
I was at the Arizona Audubon Council meeting on Saturday, January 31. I told the participants what a wonderful field trip schedule we had and how many people attended our field trips. One of the members asked me what I thought was the reason for our attendance. I told her that I thought the major reason was due to the great field trip chair we have. A number of persons who attended the anthropology field trip to the Agua Fria Monument sent e-mail messages telling us what a great time they had.

Calendar of Monthly Meetings...

**Location: Auditorium, Glendale Public Library, 5959 West Brown Street
(one block south of Peoria Ave. & 59th Ave. intersection) Time: 6:30 p.m.**

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| February 11, 2004 | Tom Jones, Grand Canyon University, "Mired in the Mud: A Look at Neotropic Rainforest Amphibians and Reptiles". |
| March 10, 2004 | Bill Branan, Audubon Ranch, "Your Audubon Ranch - Grassland Research." |
| April 14, 2004 | Clait Braun, "Discovery and Description of a New Species of Sage-grouse: Gunnison Sage-grouse." |
| May 12, 2004 | Brian Wakeling, Arizona Game and Fish: "Turkey Research and Management in Arizona" |

Other Dates of Interest: February 4 at, 6:45 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in the small meeting room. All SAS members welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society
P.O. Box 8068
Glendale, AZ 85312-8068