



Gambel's Tale's

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 5 Issue 5

January 2004

John H. Adams
President
Natural Resources Defense Council

Wild places on brink of destruction

The following are excerpts from a message that I received from John on problems facing environmental such as ours:

Despite overwhelming protest from concerned citizens like you, the Bush administration is pressing ahead with unthinkable plans to exploit and destroy three endangered BioGems that you and I have worked so hard to protect. Unless we intervene and block those plans now, the administration will proceed with open-pit mining in the historic Everglades, clearcutting in the pristine Alaskan rainforest, and drilling in Utah's world-renowned Redrock Wilderness.

They are also finalizing a plan for commercial logging in the awe-inspiring Giant Sequoia National Monument, which is not a BioGem but needs our help just as urgently.

These crown jewels of our wilderness heritage -- safeguarded by generation after generation of Americans -- stand on the very brink of ruin.

*** The Everglades ***

The Bush administration has approved permits to let mining companies bulldoze 5,000 acres of the world-famous Everglades and then dynamite them into open-pit rock mines for limestone rock that can be turned into roads and parking lots. Eventually, mining corporations want to blast a 30-square-mile hole in the middle of the historic Everglades, destroying vanishing habitat for the endangered wood stork and other rare species

*** The Alaskan Rainforest ***

The Bush administration is reviving an appalling policy that would systematically liquidate the Tongass National Forest -- our planet's largest remaining temperate rain forest and home to wolves, bald eagles and grizzly bears. rainforest far into the future, no matter what happens in the next presidential election.

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At our next meeting....

January 14, 2004

Alice Brawley - Chesworth, City of Phoenix, "Future Plans for Tres Rios"



Tres Rios Haystack Site

Photo by Robert McCormick

Alice Brawley-Chesworth is the City of Phoenix's Project Manager for the Tres Rios Project. She has bachelor's degrees in Chemistry and Russian and a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering. In her work for the City she is responsible for oversight of both the Tres Rios Demonstration Constructed Wetland Project located at 91st Avenue and the Salt River, and also is involved in the design of the future Tres Rios Flood Control and Ecosystem Restoration Project which will be a much larger project located in the same general area. Alice is also a new member of the Sonoran Audubon Society.

Alice is just the one to answer all the questions we have about the Tres Rios Project.

She should be able to answer our questions about the docent training program. How long will it last, and what will it entail? What we will we be doing after we attend the docent training program?

Tres Rios has asked for volunteer help to clear away and improve the trails. When will this start and what will be expected of the volunteers?

Are there any other volunteer programs with which the Sonoran Audubon Society can assist Tres Rios?

Tres Rios and Area to the West

There has been some discussion about doing some bird censuses in this area similar to the ones we have conducted on the Agua Fria Monument.

Maybe we can get someone to take over gathering the data that is already available. There have been two Christmas counts in the Tres Rios Christmas count circle and a large number of Christmas Counts in the Gila River Christmas Count circle.

We also have had many field trips to these areas. If we want to include this area as an Important Bird Area (IBA) we'll have to send in a large amount of data to Scott Wilbur to ensure this area will also be included as an IBA.

Is there anyone interested in taking up this job. I think Josh Burns and Dwayne Fink have done enough work on the Agua Fria Monument without taking on yet another task.

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Four wild places on brink of destruction

*** Utah's Redrock Wilderness ***

The Bush administration has given the green light for oil and gas companies to plunder millions of acres of redrock wildlands that had already been declared eligible for wilderness status. The world-renowned Book Cliffs and other beautiful canyon lands -- including critical habitat for bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope -- could soon be blighted by roads, pipelines, drill pads, waste pits and compressor stations.

*** Giant Sequoia National Monument ***

The Bush administration has issued a draft plan to allow commercial logging in California's Giant Sequoia National Monument and two nearby national forests -- home to awe-inspiring trees that can live more than 3,000 years and grow over 300 feet tall. Their plan would allow timber companies to cut down enough trees to fill more than 3,000 logging trucks every year.

Isn't it strange that we read very little of this in our local newspaper. It's only through the Internet from organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council that we can keep abreast of the upcoming environmental issues facing our nation.

They deserve our support and those of us with computers can find their web page at:

<http://www.savebiogems.org>

November 1, 2003 Sonoran Audubon 2004 Strategic Planning Retreat

Facilitator: Karen LaFrance

Participants came up with the following statement defining our organization:

Sonoran Audubon Society is a project driven organization. The projects we select define our priorities and focus.

These are the items the participants listed as the reasons for our Celebration of Success:

Celebration of Success

Off The Ground! We Exist!

Financially Solvent

Friends of Sonoran

Published Budget

Core of 100-200 Active Members

650-800 total members

Independent

Newsletter

WEB Site

Bird Lists: State, Agua Fria, Arcosanti

Well Attended Field Trips

Great General Meeting Programs

Pollinator Garden

Auction Items

Educational Workshops

Cooperation with Agencies: BLM, Upper Agua Fria Partnership, Tres Rios

Cuckoo Survey

Hosted Two Audubon Council Meetings

Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count

Partnership with Birders Anonymous

The rest of the retreat consisted of a brainstorming session and came up with

Issues for 2004 - 35 issues were outlined and will be presented to the members at our general meetings.

The group then came up with an action plan table which consisted of the following column headings CATEGORY, ACTION, MEASURE, WHO, WHEN, COMMENTS, and ORGANIZATION. This consisted of over 60 rows. You can see we put in a full day and will have much to share with you during the coming months.

A message from your president...

When we had our first organizational meeting of our chapter four years ago in December of 1999, I think all of us felt a little anxious that we could get it off the ground. If we hadn't had the Rodger's come to bat for us it would have been problematical. If you remember Hugh Rodgers started our web page and Regina Rodgers started our newsletter.

We went through all the hurdles. We received our Articles of Incorporation for a non-profit corporation, from the state of Arizona, wrote our by-laws and received our non-profit 501c3 status from the IRS and we became a bona fide chapter.

This fall we had a board retreat and elsewhere in the newsletter I'll list the accomplishments our board felt we had achieved our first four years.

When we first wrote our new by-laws we felt it was very important to have term limits for our officers and board members. Our by-laws state: Terms for officers shall be two (2) years. No Officer shall serve more than two (2) consecutive and full terms in the same office. For three of us we have reached that point. The president, secretary and treasurer have all served two full terms in the same office and will have to be replaced.

When you are approached by a member of the nominating committee please give it serious reflection. We want to continue to keep striving forward from our start of four years ago.

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

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Portions of a Letter from Economists to President Bush and the Governors of Eleven Western States Regarding the Economic Importance of the West's Natural Environment

Ed Whitelaw, editor

We are economists and we are writing to express our concern about federal and state actions that harm the West's natural environment and, as a result, the economic outlook for this region's workers, families, firms, and communities.

The West's natural environment is, arguably, its greatest, long run economic strength. The natural landscapes of the western states, with wide open spaces, outdoor recreational opportunities, and productive natural-resource systems underlie a quality of life that contributes to robust economic growth by attracting productive families, firms, and investments. The West's natural environment, however, faces serious challenges that threaten to undermine its contribution to the economy. These include air and water pollution, urban sprawl, the extension of roads and other development in roadless public lands, and fragmentation of habitat for native fish and wildlife.

We ask each of you to renew and strengthen your efforts to secure for the West both a healthy environment and a prosperous economy. Toward this end, we ask you to initiate a review of your administration's actions affecting the environment and the economy. This review should:

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- Identify actions having a significant impact on the environment and full describe the benefits and costs of each.
- Reinforce those actions that strengthen the economy by protecting or restoring environmental quality.
- Arrest those actions that damage the economy by degrading the environment.

We are not saying that resource-intensive industries (agriculture, timber, commercial fishing, and mining) do not play an important role in the West's economies. They are important today, and we expect they will remain important in the future.

We are not saying that the shift away from industries and activities harmful to the environment will not hurt some worker, families, and communities. It has hurt in the past and it will in the future.

We are not saying that protecting and improving the environment can be accomplished without costs, nor are we saying that governmental entities should disregard such costs. To the contrary, we are calling for full consideration of the full range of costs and benefits of policies, decisions, and activities that affect western environment and, hence, its economy.

We are not saying no progress is being made in capitalizing on the link between environmental health and economic prosperity. Many private-sector firms and public agencies have taken actions to reduce their negative impact on the environment and have found that they have saved money.

Rather, we are saying that nearly all communities in the West will find that they cannot have a health economy without a healthy environment. Moreover, there exist many opportunities in the West to improve both the environment and the economy, for example, the elimination of inefficient subsidies would make more money available for other public services or to reduce the debt. The longer these opportunities languish, the fewer will be the West's jobs, the lower its incomes, and the poorer its communities. Conversely, the sooner we seize these opportunities, the sooner the West will enjoy more jobs, higher incomes, and greater prosperity.

We are saying that the economic pressures to arrest and reverse environmental degradation will increase. Those who promise that workers, firms, and communities tied to environmentally harmful activities can avoid these pressures if only the environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act, were set aside raise false hopes. The pressures are independent of specific laws. Even if such laws were repealed, the costs of environmentally harmful activities will continue to rise and jeopardize the economic outlook for affected communities.

Public officials can best promote long-run economic prosperity in West by encouraging efficient transitions away from harmful Activities toward those beneficial to both the environment and the economy.

We are requesting that you recognize the important role the environment plays in western economies and take the steps we've identified to strengthen these economies by protecting and enhancing the quality of the region's natural environment.

Sincerely and respectfully,

This was followed by the names of a group of 104 economists showing their institutional affiliation. The institutional references were provided for identification only.

The original letter consisted of twelve pages along with the names of President Bush and the names of the eleven governors of the western states.

I think all of you can see that there isn't enough room in our newsletter to print out the whole letter but those of you with computers can click on the following address and print out the complete letter:

<http://www.econw.com/pdf/120303letter.pdf>

Also, there is an article by an Associated Press writer concerning the letter which you can find at

<http://www.theworldlink.com/articles/2003/12/04/news/news13.txt>

You might have to copy and paste the above address.

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.

Tres Rios Christmas Count Highlights

By Troy Corman

I participated in the Phoenix-Tres Rios CBC yesterday, 18 December. Weather was excellent, but fewer than expected lingering birds. I think the sudden drop in temperatures the last few days of October and early November, sent many potential and almost expected insectivorous goodies south. Even though there were many Yellow-rumped and Orange-crowned Warblers, there were no vireos found while scouting or on count day. This is quite unusual for this area of the state. Still, the unofficial total was a respectable 142 species.

The YELLOW WARBLER remained to be counted at the Cobble Ponds, but I could not relocate the male Northern (Yellow-shafted) Flicker I observed there the day before. The BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER I observed at the Cobble Ponds a few weeks ago materialized approximately 0.75 mile west along the effluent channel. In this same area I found a silent "WESTERN" FLYCATCHER. My area produced 5 BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLERS and 3 SWAMP SPARROWS for the day, and several of each were also found in adjacent areas.

My best mammal for the day was a HOARY BAT roosting by one foot on a small limb of a young cottonwood at the Cobble Ponds. Hoffmeister (Mammals of Arizona, 1986) noted winter records only from southeastern Arizona, but there is still much to learn about the distribution of bats in AZ.

Other highlights reported by others included:

AMERICAN WHITE PELICAN

All four expected geese (CANADA, ROSS'S, SNOW, and GR. WHITE-FRONTED)

BLACK VULTURE

WHITE-WINGED DOVE

SHORT-EARED OWL

ACORN WOODPECKER

WILSON'S WARBLER

Not really a highlight, but new to the count were several areas with EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVES.

By Chuck Kangas

I also participated in the count, along with George Wall, Dick Fogle and Eleanor Campbell. We had two Merlin's sitting in a tree allowing us to set up the scope and compare them with the illustrations in Sibley's guide. A mile or two down the road we saw yet a third Merlin. The most I have ever seen in a single day in Arizona!

How to Meet Influential People

By Ann McDermott

On my second scouting trip of the area in the Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count that I would lead, I decided to check out the area by myself so I had the route in my head and had accounted for timing and pacing the next day, which was count day.

Part of my territory consisted of some agricultural fields in the northernmost part. On my first scouting foray, with Daniela Yellan, the easiest route to the fields was open, but we didn't know the rancher's name. We decided that the letters from Flood Control giving permission to count birds would be sufficient to go on to those fields and if there was any problem with our being there, I'd just leave and count elsewhere. Daniela said that if the chain blocking the road was in place the day of the count, I could still get to the fields from the end of Cotton Lane. I could drive past a trailer, park off the road, and walk with the group to the fields. It would mean a lot of walking and not the best coverage but at least there would be access.

The day I scouted alone, I walked through the lake region of Estrella Mountain Ranch, figuring how much time to spend and what route was open around the new home construction going on there. My new/used truck was moaning during some turns, so I stopped to check the level of the power steering fluid while in the parking lot of the south lake. The hood release was useless. It seemed the cable was loose, perhaps broken, and I thought I would go to a garage later in the afternoon to have it fixed and check the power steering fluid level.

Unfortunately, when I went to the farm road heading out to the fields, the chain was up, forcing me to use the alternating, unfamiliar Cotton Lane entry. I drove past the trailer and potential parking area, but it still seemed a long way to the fields and the road didn't look too bad, so I tried it.

Yes, I got stuck. I got close to the fields, but I got stuck. I packed tamarisk branches from an obliging tree under the tires and backed out a few feet, but got stuck again. When I pressed down on the hood to push the truck, the hood popped up...so I took advantage of the opportunity to check the power steering fluid level.

The afternoon was wearing on, and I had a walk in store for me before dark, so I hiked back to Cotton Lane to the trailer. I met the owner, who told me he couldn't help me, but that the farmer at MC 85 and Cotton Lane had pulled folks out of the riverbed before.

The trailer owner warned me that the rancher was pretty sick and tired of having to do so, though, and so his mood might not be the best when I made my request. I hiked on down to the rancher's house and happily found him at home.

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How to Meet Influential People

His mood was, indeed, not the best, but when I explained why I was out there, he felt somewhat better about it, reminded himself it was Christmas, and kindly drove his tractor into the riverbed after my truck and towed me out.

He looked familiar to me, so I asked if he had kids who had gone to Litchfield School District schools, as had my son. He said no, but that he'd once worked for a rancher that I'd known 15 years ago, and had probably met him there. Now he farmed land for a cattle company. Turns out the fields I wanted to get to were his. He kindly agreed to have the chain down for me the next day so I could get my group to the fields and count birds the easy way. What a relief!

I asked for his card for future years permission to enter the fields. He gave me one, but said the fields might not be there next year and definitely would not be by the year after that. The whole area was going to housing developers. "Nobody cares about ranchers and ranching anymore," he stated despairingly. "We're getting pushed aside everywhere."

"What will you do?" I asked.

"That's a good question," was all he could answer.

When I was growing up in Arizona in the sixties, I learned the state's economy was based on the "Five C's"-Citrus, Cotton, Cattle, Copper and Climate. But times change....

And we all gotta change with the times, right? But is this the price we must pay for acres of perfectly manicured residential areas to house the new economic powers-that-be in our rapidly burgeoning population of citizens? Just a moment to pause and reflect.

Well, may one farmer find in his future the same mercy he extended to me the day before the Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count, 2003.

Editor's Note:

Ann should have been around in years back when Bob Bradley did a lot of birding together. We got stuck in the sand countless times and developed a reputation for "getting stuck" One time on the Yuma Christmas Count I was with a new birder and slid off the edge of the road and was stuck in the sand. The unnamed birder thought for sure we were going to drop down into the canyon. She has never gone birding with me again.

CJK

Fall and Winter 2003 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

Jan 10, Saturday

Jackie Meck Lake

Leader: Chuck Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

Explore this rich habitat 'lake' at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers, near Estrella Mountain Park. This is part of the Buckeye Water District Conservation Area. This is an opportunity to hopefully see many species of waterfowl, as well as possible migrants along the canal.

Meet at Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City to LEAVE at 7:30 AM.

Difficulty: 1 Meet at Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City to LEAVE at 7:30 AM.

Wednesday though Saturday January 15- 17

Agua Fria Monument

Dwayne Fink 480-967-9202

edna.fink@asu.edu

Agua Fria National Monument Winter Bird Count: We need another winter count on the monument before we print up the official AFNM Bird List. Also, we need the count to strengthen the case for the Monument being designated an Important Bird Area. This notice is for you all to get in on your calendars, and to invite any new birders to join up.

Wednesday, January 21

Gilbert Water Ranch

Dwayne Fink 480-967-9202

edna.fink@asu.edu

This is a combined SAS/Birders Anonymous trip to Gilbert Water Ranch, located SE corner Guadalupe Rd and Greenfield Rd (go east on Superstition Freeway (US 60), then south to Guadalupe Rd. Park south side of library

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Start time: 8:30 a.m. We'll bird until noon. West-siders may car pool from Birders' Anonymous Site # 2 (Parking lot of Sun Bowl at 107th Ave) at 7:30 a.m. Expect wintering ducks and migrating shore birds.

Saturday January 24
Agua Fria National Monument Archeology Trip
Coordinator: Chuck Kangas 623-931-6677
chuckkan@mindspring.com

This will be a trip to the Agua Fria Monument led by the Bureau of Land Management's archeologist, Connie Stone. She not only knows where all the sites are but she can provide information on bird images in the rock art of the monument.

This trip is not yet completely coordinated. There will be a limit of twenty people and it will also depend on how many 4-wheel drive vehicles we can line up. We will meet about 8:00 AM at a designated part of the monument. Call for more details.

The trip shouldn't be too strenuous because most of the sites can almost be reached by vehicles. The majority of the ruins are off of RD 14 so time between sites will be fairly short.

Besides the ruins and rock art other notables will be the possible sightings of antelope, many sparrows, Golden Eagles and several other raptors, all of the migrating folks like Juncos, Robins and Bluebirds, and of course the view!

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. 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.

Mark your Calendars! Coming in March!

March 13 and 14, 2004 Tres Rios Bird Festival
March 18, 2004 Granite Reef Dam/Coon Bluff day Field Trip
March 24-26, 2004 Rocky Point, Mexico, Get Away

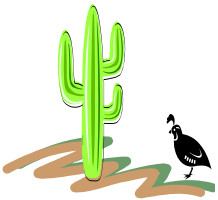
Details in the February Newsletter.

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.**

January 14, 2004	Alice Brawley - Chesworth, City of Phoenix, "Future Plans for Tres Rios"
February 11, 2004	Tom Jones, Grand Canyon University, "Mired in the Mud: A Look at Neotropical 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: January 7 at, 6:45 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in the small meeting room. All SAS members welcome.



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