



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 7 Issue 2

October 2005

IBA NEWS

By Josh Burns

When we were making the surveys leading to the Agua Fria NM checklist (soon to be published) most of us really enjoyed the chance to see the seasonal and annual changes in the river and its forests. After the wet winter willows are becoming the dominant tree and shrub on the Horseshoe Ford Transect, tantalizing with the possibility of Willow Flycatchers as well as our present Bell's Vireo population. Probably a result of the wet year, a small group of sky-larking Cassin's Sparrows has been found on Perry Mesa where Carl Tomoff found them doing the Breeding Bird Atlas. The winter floods moved Volkswagen sized boulders around in the Sycamore Creek narrows.

Agua Fria NM IBA. We have three transects on the monument – Horseshoe Ford South, and Sycamore Creek West and East. This latter site is monitored by Walt Anderson and the Prescott Audubon Society.

Salt-Lower Gila Rivers Ecosystem IBA. We are establishing six count sites on this IBA, coordinated with work of Arizona Game and Fish. These will be at: the Tres Rios WWTP area, the B&M site, Jackie Meck Lake, and Robbins Butte, Powers Butte, and Arlington Valley WMAs.

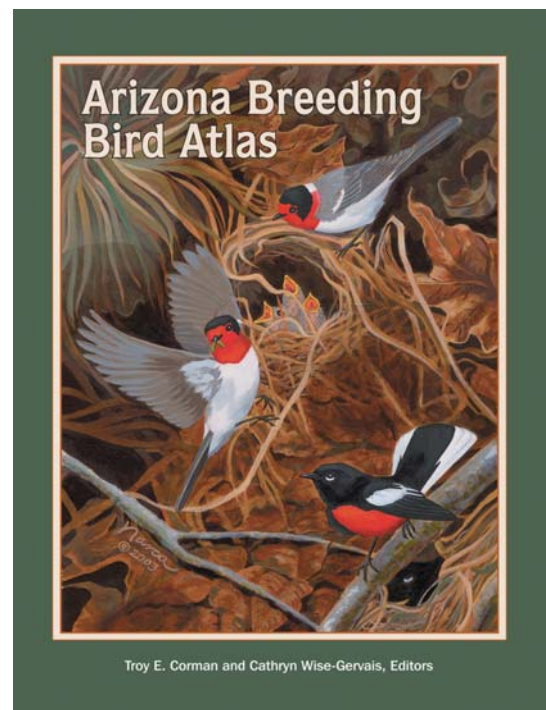
Survey Teams. We are in the process of setting up survey teams for the various IBA monitoring sites. Each team will consist of a leader and 4 or more counters. Most surveys require only two or three counters so no one on the six-person teams will be needed for every survey. The leader will be responsible for organizing each count and for making sure the data gets to me for final processing.

A signup sheet at the September General Meeting gave us a good start on new and renewed counters. We will be contacting everyone on the old e-mail contact list to see what their interests are.

This is a very important endeavor and we urge everyone who signed up to participate as much as possible.

At our next meeting...October 12, 2005

TROY CORMAN: Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas – The project, the book, and the future



A monumental statewide endeavor, the Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas project was coordinated primarily from 1993-2000. It involved the dedicated efforts of over 650 volunteer birders throughout the state, many of which were recruited from local Audubon chapters. Funded by the Heritage Fund (lottery money!), this is the first such volume in the state. After more than three years of data analysis, writing and editing, and another half a year for printing and shipping, the first Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas book became available in August 2005. Through the many species accounts that include maps and graphs, this book provides an overview of the distribution and natural history of the state's 300+ nesting birds at the end of the twentieth century. Data from this project also establishes a baseline against which to compare future range changes of the state's marvelous and diverse birdlife.

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TROY CORMAN

Troy Corman, coordinator of the atlas project and senior editor of the book, will give a power point presentation that includes a brief overview on the atlas project, and discuss several project highlights, the book, and future bird conservation endeavors that volunteers could assist in. Some books will be available for purchase. This encyclopedic volume may also be purchased at a reduced price on line at www.amazon.com or ordered locally at most bookstores. Troy (and possibly his co-editor, Cathy Wise-Gervais) will be available for book signing either before or after the meeting.

Troy Corman has been an avid birder since high school in rural Pennsylvania. He came to Arizona in 1980 to pursue higher education and new adventures and stayed. His passion and vast knowledge of our avian friends is clearly evident to those who participate in his field trips or lectures. This love of nature is not limited to birds; Troy is also very interested in snakes, lizards, butterflies and desert plants.

When he is not at work at Arizona Game and Fish, Troy enjoys birding around the state, as well as taking birding trips to exotic locations all around the world.

1. A date for the annual retreat was set. It will be November 19, 2005 at Hassayampa. This retreat is where ideas, initiatives, and goals are formed and planned for the coming year.

2. The State Trust Land Initiative that has been in the news was discussed and the board recommended approval and support. (See separate article on subject)

3. The board standardized the agenda for General Meetings.

4. It was decided to have a **Photo Contest**. More on this in the next newsletter.



At our September General Meeting, a nice presentation was made by the designers of the Butterfly Garden for Tres Rios. They showed us what the garden would look like. This is a project that the Sonoran Audubon Society is sponsoring and it looks like things are well on the way.

What's Happening?

By Your Editor

On 9 September, 2005, a few Sonoran Audubon Society members (Ann Durning, Dick Fogle, Karen LaFrance, Bob McCormick, Tice Supplee and George Wall) journeyed to Sierra Vista for the Audubon Celebration that was co-sponsored by the Arizona Audubon Council and Audubon Arizona. The workshops were very good and the birding was great. There were door prizes (Dick Fogle and George Wall each won a door prize) and there were raffles (Dick Fogle and Karen LaFrance each won a raffle prize). The food was very good at the banquet, but the highlight of the night was Kenn Kaufman who was the main speaker. He presented a slide program that kept everyone interested as well as laughing. There were around 60 or so people from the various Audubon Chapters, but there should have been more. This celebration was open to everyone and those who weren't there missed out on a great weekend.

The Hassayampa River Preserve will reopen to the public on October 15, 2005 at 8 a.m. The hours will be Wednesday through Sunday from 8-5. This is always a fun spot to visit.

Here are some of the things that transpired at the last board meeting held on September 7, 2005:

TRES RIOS DOCENT TRAINING

There were several of you who took Docent training for the Tres Rios Wetlands quite awhile back. Only one tour was given by a trained Docent before the West Nile Virus and flooding caused management to stop the tours. By now, many of you have forgotten this training. Here's a chance for you to regain your expertise and also for new volunteers to join the Docent group.

Docent training for old and new people will be held October 8th and 9th and again on October 22nd and 23rd of 2005. These dates are for Saturday and Sunday. Meet at 8:00 am at the Tres Rios Wetlands Haystack parking lot (turn onto the dirt road off of 91st just past the treatment plant and go all the way to the end). There you'll be met by trainers who will provide you with new pamphlets and other information. The training shouldn't last more than 2-3 hours. Bring your own water.

For further information, contact Miachel Guethlein at 602-495-3727.

Book Review:

By Nancy Kroening

There are a lot of good books currently on the market and here's another good one I enjoyed. **BIRDSONG** by Don Stap released in 2005 by Scribner.

Don Stap, a University of Central Florida professor and frequent contributor to Audubon Magazine, turned his curiosity about bird songs into a travelogue and modern history of birdsong research. His journeys with Don Kroodsma, University of Massachusetts biology professor, to Martha's Vineyard, the Sierra Valley in Nevada, and Costa Rica allow the reader to tag along on a great birding adventure. The three-wattled bellbird is the greatest reward, high in the hills of Costa Rica.

This reader was saddened and angered by descriptions of the capture and killing of thousands of birds (like Bewick's wrens and white-crowned sparrows) for research. New research guidelines are overdue.

Don Kroodsma, the birdsong researcher, is publishing his own book soon. It will be called *The Singing Life of Birds*. His book will be a good match for Don Stap's fine book. Birdsong aficionados also might want to investigate the Macaulay Library of Natural Sound at <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/macaulaylibrary/>.

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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The above 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

TREASURER’S REPORT

September 9, 2005

	Budgeted	Actual
INCOME		
NAS dues return	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 0.00
Chapter Sources	4,525.00	69.73
Projects	0.00	0.00
TOTAL	\$ 5,525.00	\$ 69.73

EXPENDITURES

Fund-raising	\$ 200.00	\$ 0.00
Committees	1,480.00	317.74
Projects	500.00	0.00
Chapter Operations	1,845.00	481.93
Insurance	900.00	0.00
TOTAL	\$ 5,525.00	\$799.67

CHANGE IN CASH **\$(869.40)**

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Total Cash (Savings/Checking)	\$ 13,199.45
Encumbered	<u>1,111.16</u>

CLEAR FUNDS **\$ 12,088.29**

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 the Treasurer, Loretta Richards at carichards@nowonline.net or 25431 N. 63rd Dr, Glendale AZ 85310

ARIZONA STATE TRUST LAND REFORM INITIATIVE

This was from a press release dated July 19, 2005

A broad-based coalition of conservationists, educators and business leaders today filed the necessary paperwork with the Arizona Secretary of State to place the “Conserving Arizona’s Future” state trust land reform initiative on the 2006 general election ballot.

The ballot measure is a landmark reform package that, if passed by Arizona voters, would do three primary things:

- Conserve and protect nearly 694,000 acres of some of

the most important areas in Arizona and protect them from development for generations of Arizonans to enjoy.

- Provide state and local authorities the power to limit and control development and force developers to build quality projects.
- Protect and guarantee an essential classroom funding stream ensuring better schools for Arizona.

In addition, Conserving Arizona’s Future establishes a board of trustees to oversee the transactions and provides funding for the Arizona State Land Department from a percentage of the proceeds from the sale, making the agency more self-sufficient and less dependent on the taxpayer funded state general fund. “Arizonans shouldn’t have to choose between conservation and education,” said Pat

Graham, executive director of The Nature Conservancy of Arizona. “Our state’s voters want protection of Arizona’s most critical natural areas, and this collaborative effort means we can do that today—not when it’s too late.

This statewide plan also provides for better community planning and a steady flow of funding to our public schools. Arizona’s growth won’t wait, and neither should we.” As the primary benefactor of state trust land sales, Arizona’s education community is a vital partner supporting the reform package.

“This is an unprecedented opportunity for an education and conservation partnership,” said John Wright, President of the Arizona Education Association. “Preserving almost 700,000 acres of open space while protecting and enhancing vital funds for our public schools is great win for all of Arizona.”

The proposed reform initiative protects some of Arizona’s most cherished places like:

— The McDowell Mountains, Spur Cross Ranch Conservation Area, the Cave Creek Recreation Area, and Phoenix Sonoran Preserve in Maricopa County.

— The Big Chino grasslands and upper Verde River north of Prescott.

— The Tortolita Mountains, parts of Saguaro National Park, and the Rincon Valley in Tucson.

— Centennial Forest, Observatory Mesa, Walnut Canyon, and Wupatki National Monument in the Flagstaff area.

— Several of Arizona’s State Parks including Picacho Peak State Park, Karchner Cavern State Park, Lake Patagonia Stake Park, and Homolovi Ruins.

Observing an Elf Owl Nest

By Helen Snyder, Portal, AZ

This is the final installment of the adventures of an Elf Owl family.



19 June, 2005

The 2005 Elf Owl nesting cycle is at its end. The nest box bottom on the tape tonight is as empty of life as it was way back on March 9 when I first turned on the camera, before the arrival of the male Elf Owl.

The first two chicks fledged on Friday and Saturday nights (June 17-18th) shortly after dark, and only one remained in the nest today, looking like a little brown mushroom cap from the camera's view-point. It's the middle chick by feather development, but has been the lightest in weight of the three all along, a picky eater with a passive personality that seems retiring compared to its two boisterous nest-mates. It fledged tonight, and all three are out in the dark dense brush learning the secrets of survival by cicada stalking and katydid catching.

The chicks had been spending time in the nest entrance both by day and night, at last getting a look at the world only hinted at by the tiny circle of sky high in the wall of the nest box. When one hogged the view over-long, another impatiently nipped heels and twisted tail feathers from below, resulting in pain cries and a switch. The adult female got trapped in the box several times when she entered to feed, then found the exit plugged by one of her offspring. She was gentler than her kids at getting around the blockage, patiently nudging and shouldering her way into the opening so she could get out.

Once fledging neared the female became increasingly agitated. From inside the house, I could hear her giving Yip! alarm calls while hunting around the entire 100-foot radius of her current foraging range and taking food to the nest. The effect of these alarm calls on the chicks at first was to cause them quit peering out and to flatten their bodies in the bottom of the box but they seemed to habituate to her calls after a while. I tried watching near the nest from my customary spot near the nest tree, but after a couple of her attempted felony take-

downs on me, in which she swooped over my head and then perched on a branch a few feet away and glared at me, I took the hint and went back inside. Female Elf Owls are supposed to let their mates do most of the parental care at this stage, but this widowed bird has carried the full load without a hitch. Maybe life is easy enough that one bird can do it all or maybe this was an exception.

One chick fledged by just leaning farther and farther out till it slid clear of the box. The other two chicks' departure looked deliberate: each peered at a nearby perch and launched, flying upward to land not far away judging by the noises. I'd mounted a second matchbox-sized camera to watch the outside of the box, and one of the fledglings jumped onto it, wings flopping over the lens and claws shrieking deafeningly on the tiny microphone.

Once, she had two on the wing, the female divided her time between 10-minute bouts of feeding the last nestling and doing invisible things out there in the dark with her two fledglings for an hour at a time. She was very vocal away from the nest, no longer giving alarm calls but keeping up a steady patter of notes like those of the Chatter song but less organized into phrases. I tried triangulating on her without getting close, and she was in very dense, head-high brush, perhaps encouraging the chicks to follow her there to good cover for daytime concealment. From past years, I know they will become very hard to detect. I heard the female giving yips outside night before last, probably due to a Western Screech Owl invading her private porch-light hunting preserve. It is early summer in Arizona and near the peak of the annual heat cycle. The Elf Owl's sycamore tree is laden with heavy leaves and drooping under cloudless skies and low humidity. Young birds, owls included, suffer the highest mortality right after fledging, but if they can make it through the next few days and nights undiscovered by jays, roadrunners, snakes, and larger owls, their chances for living improve by the hour. The shortest night of the year is days away, after which point the time available for feeding (if you're an owl) begins to lengthen again. Soon there will be the July rains and a rush of insect life, a second spring, biologically speaking. As nights lengthen and fat slow June beetles appear, life will be good for the small insectivorous owls of southern Arizona as they hunt, rest, molt and prepare for their migration to Mexico.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

The Christmas Bird Count is fast approaching. Save Friday, December 16, 2005 for the Tres Rios Christmas Bird Count sponsored by the Sonoran Audubon Society. For more information or to sign up, please contact Daniela Yellan, Compiler at danielay11@earthlink.net or (603) 942-7791.

There will be a lot more on this subject later.

Fall/Winter 2005 Field Trips

Saturday, October 8, 2005

Jackie Meck Lake

Leader: Chuck Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

Explore this rich habitat at the confluence of the Agua Fria and Gila Rivers near Estrella Mountain Park. The 'lake' is part of the Buckeye Water District Conservation Area. There is a Great Blue Heron rookery and a Great Horned Owl was spotted on the field trip in the past.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only

Meet at the Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City to leave at 7:00 a.m.

Thursday, October 13, 2005

Page Springs Area

Leader: John Delventhal

Contact: Chuck Richards 623-594-6554

carichards@nowonline.net

John is the former Vice President of Sonoran Audubon and now resides in Cornville which is North of Cottonwood on Oak Creek. We'll be birding around the Page Springs Hatchery in the morning. Picnic tables will be available for those who wish to bring a lunch. After lunch, those who wish can bird Montezuma's Well. We will meet behind Denny's at the corner of I-17 and Bell Rd (SW corner) and will be leaving at 6:00 a.m. There is ample room to park excess cars.

Difficulty 1 with the exception of walking down at Montezuma which is optional.

Thursday, October 27, 2005

Badger Springs

Leader: George Wall 623-875-7057

wallaby@worldnet.att.net

Badger Springs is a part of the Agua Fria National Monument with a variety of habitats including a desert and mesquite area, a cottonwoods stand and a trail leading down to the Agua Fria River where you'll also find some petroglyphs on the cliffs. The river runs all year long at this location. A variety of birds has been seen here like Rock Wrens, gnatcatchers and tanagers. There have also been Yellow-billed Cuckoos nesting at one time or another. This is a morning trip only.

Difficulty: 1-1 1/2 Walking down the river bed in sand and some rocks.

Meet at the Bell Recreation Center parking lot, SW corner of Boswell and Hutton Dr in Sun City to leave at 7 a.m. Call leader for alternate meeting place, directions and details.

Thursday, November 10, 2005

McCormick Ranch Lake & Pavilion Ponds

Leader Richard Fogle 623-584-3922

rpfogle@yahoo.com

McCormick Ranch is in North Scottsdale and has several lakes and ponds with grassy areas and trees in which to look for birds. The same holds true for the Pavilion Ponds. There are always wintering ducks scurrying around in the water. Last year at approximately the same time, 40 species of birds were seen.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only.

Meet at the Bell Recreation Center parking lot (Hutton Drive near Boswell) in Sun City to leave at 7:00 a.m. or call the leader for alternate meeting place.

Saturday, November 19, 2005

Red Rock Road & Pecan Grove

Leader: Donna Smith 623-556-9535

rms15247@cs.com

The pecan grove, along the lower Santa Cruz River, is known as a fall migrant trap and anything may be possible. Birds that have been seen there include Lewis's Woodpecker, Vermillion Flycatcher, thrashers, doves, Pyrrhuloxia and Burrowing Owls along the road.

Difficulty: 1

We will meet at the Sun Bowl parking lot on 107th Ave. just south of Peoria Ave. in Sun City at 7am. and at the Denny's at the corner of I-10 and Litchfield Rd. at approximately 7:00 a.m. Bring a lunch.

Monday-Thursday, Nov 28-Dec 1, 2005

Bosque del Apache, New Mexico

Leaders: Richard Fogle 623-584-3922

rpfogle@yahoo.com & **Donna Smith 623-556-9535**

rms15247@cs.com

This is a national wildlife refuge where you'll be able to see thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese with a few Ross' Geese thrown in to compare to at close range. There are always lots waterfowl and raptors at this marvelous place. We last visited this area in January 2003 and we saw 89 species.

The current plan also calls for a day trip to Albuquerque to see the 3 different Rosy-Finches at Sandia Peak. This trip will depend on the weather and if the road to Sandia Peak is at normal driving conditions.

Call the leaders to get your name on the list and any necessary information.

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Fall/Winter 2005 Field Trips

Tuesday, December 6, 2005

Tres Rios: Hayfield & Cobblestone areas

Leader: George Wall 623-875-7057

wallaby@worldnet.att.net

You're always going to see a lot of birds at these two areas right next to each other. At an earlier outing in August of this year, 43 species were seen including the Least Bittern, Sora, and lots of Green Herons. This time of the year, there should be several ducks on the ponds.

Difficulty: 1 – easy flat walking trails

Leave at 7:30 a.m. from the Sun Bowl parking lot (107th Ave just south of Peoria in Sun City); so be there a few minutes early for car-pooling.

RIO SALADO AUDUBON CENTER

Overlooking the restored and revitalized Salt River, the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center will be an important nature and conservation resource for greater Phoenix as well as 36 elementary schools and 14 high schools located within 20 minutes of the Center. The Center's strategic location in the multicultural heart of the city will provide hands-on nature education and experiences in a riparian habitat rich with animal and plant life.

We need Sonoran Audubon Society to help us make this an exciting, richly environmental opportunity for kids, families, chapter members AND birds, wildlife, and riparian desert habitat!

Research shows that direct experience in nature is the single most important factor in developing conservation values among young people. The central focus of Audubon's mission is the human experience of wildlife in natural settings, enhanced by science classes and projects, hikes, family adventures, and conservation programs, designed to engender a conservation ethic and to provide life-long learning opportunities. Audubon Arizona is committed to bringing high quality nature experiences into the urban environment.

The Rio Salado Audubon Center will bring to greater Phoenix:

1. An environmentally integrated (green) building available to the public for nature education and community events.

2. Adjacent wetlands, outdoor spaces, gardens and interpretative trails to enhance the Center's programs and visitor experience at the Rio Salado habitat restoration.

3. Interactive programs for school children that supplement school science curricula and foster a culture of conservation.

4. Hands-on experiences for families that are science-based, fun, and bring nature into the urban environment.

5. A permanent home for Sonoran and Maricopa chapters to birdwatch, adopt the Rio Salado IBA, and meet for programs, monthly gatherings, chapter meetings.

PLEASE JOIN US ON SATURDAY, November 5th, TO DEDICATE THE FIVE-MILE, \$100 MILLION RESTORED HABITAT OF THE RIO SALADO PRESERVE, on Central Avenue and the Salt River. Program begins at 9am; the Nature Festival from 10-2pm.

Please come – please volunteer – please come for a tour even before the project opens!

WINGS OVER WILLCOX

For those of you who like to plan in advance, the 13th Annual Wings over Willcox Sandhill Crane Celebration will be held January 12-15, 2006 in Willcox, AZ.

Tours and Seminars will focus on Sandhill Cranes, Raptors and Winter Sparrows, Geology, Southwest History, Archeology, Mining, Ranching, Farming, Beginning and Advanced Birding, Wildlife Photography, Astronomy, African Violets, Bats and Reptiles. There will be free seminars, a trade fair, banquet and silent auction.

One of the new birding trips added this year will be to the mountains of Cochise County. Travel to the Chiricahua National Monument and visit Pinery Canyon and Turkey Creek looking for Montezuma Quail, Mexican Chickadee, Olive Warbler, Northern Pygmy Owl, Arizona Woodpecker and other birds.

There's even a Spanish Beginning Birdwatching tour That will be in Spanish.

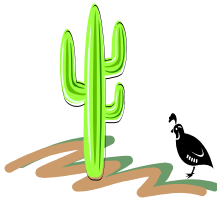
For more details and registration forms, go online at www.wingsoverwillcox.com or call 1-800-200-2272.

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.**

October 12, 2005	Troy Corman, Arizona Game & Fish avian biologist, Arizona Game & Fish Department: “Arizona Breeding Bird Atlas: The Project, Book and Future”
November 9, 2005	Jorge Canaca, Wildlife Specialist, Bald Eagle biologist, Arizona Game & Fish Department: “The Management of the Southwestern Bald Eagle in Arizona”
December 14, 2005	David Pearson, Ph.D. Arizona State University: “Why are there more bird species some places than others?”
January 11, 2005	Shawneen Finnegan Desert Plover and Peep Primer: “Shorebirds in Arizona”

Other Dates of Interest: October 5, 2005 at 6:45 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in the small meeting room. All SAS members welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society
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