



Gamble's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 4 Issue 4

December 2002

Nature Conservancy Letter

By Regina Rodgers

November 10, 2002

Mike Rigney

Hassayampa Watershed Program Manager

The Nature Conservancy, Hassayampa River Preserve

49614 Highway 60

Wickenburg, Arizona 85390

Dear Mike:

As you know, there are many of us who are very concerned about The Nature Conservancy's proposed sale of endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat. The habitat referenced is the Palm Lake area in the Hassayampa River Preserve in Wickenburg, Arizona. The Palm Lake area is included in the proposed sale of acreage to the Desert Caballeros Western Museum. In addition to concern about degradation of the Palm Lake habitat, the increased development and increased usage of the upland area would disrupt the behavior and breeding of the endangered Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. I have enclosed an aerial photograph of a portion of the Hassayampa River Preserve that shows the lush vegetation surrounding Palm Lake and the close proximity of the Visitor Center and other buildings to the Palm Lake area.

There is considerable documentation that the Palm Lake area is Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat. For example, the data submitted to the Nongame and Endangered Wildlife Program of the Arizona Game and Fish Department for inclusion in the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Survey and Nest Monitoring program documents Southwestern Willow Flycatcher nesting. And, since the inception in June 1999 of the bird banding program at HRP, there have been seven Southwestern Willow Flycatchers banded in the Palm Lake area. The capture of Southwestern Willow Flycatchers spanned the calendar months of April through September. We understand that TNC is aware that the proposed sale area is Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat.

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At our next meeting....

Wednesday December, 11 at 6:30 p.m.

"The Magic of Cape May"

By Shawneen Finnegan



Twenty years ago Shawneen Finnegan began birding in the San Francisco Bay area where she grew up. Combining her passion for birds and love of travel she has birded all over the United States and parts of Canada, plus multiple trips abroad. An accomplished bird artist, she has had many illustrations published in books and magazines. She has given workshops and lectures on birding around the country. A former member of the California Bird Records Committee, she is currently a member of the New Jersey Bird Records Committee and a board member of WildBird Magazine. Shawneen is also the author of BirdArea, a commercial software database delineating the ranges of the birds of the world. During the 1990's she led tours for WINGS within the United States, but now she lives in Tucson and works in the WINGS office there.

For seven years Shawneen lived in Cape May, New Jersey, one of the premiere birding locations in North America.

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Nature Conservancy Letter

TNC's own web site for the Hassayampa River Preserve states "*The large willows around the lake provide important nesting habitat for the endangered southwestern willow flycatcher.*"

After consulting with professionals in the environmental community, the consensus is that the sale of this property will amount to "take" under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). "Take" is defined as actions that will kill, harm, harass or affect the behavior of an endangered species. Because the terms of the proposed sale will affect the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher habitat and cause the species harm, it will amount to take of an endangered species. Agriculture, livestock, recreation, and development are all known threats to the species, both directly and indirectly. Since it is illegal to affect the behavior in anyway of an endangered species without a Section 10 ESA take permit, TNC must therefore obtain a Section 10 ESA take permit from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service before proceeding with the sale. Because issuance of this permit is a federal action, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service must prepare an Environmental Impact Statement under NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and a formal biological opinion (under the ESA) before issuing the permit.

The proposed sale of HRP land that allows the degradation of habitat and harm to an endangered species is not a simple matter. The sale of this land would involve approval procedures with several governmental agencies. The sale of the adjacent Visitor Center land is also questionable since the proposed Museum activities would cause stress and harm to the nesting efforts of an endangered species. This sale is also in direct violation of TNC charter as stated on the TNC web site. We would strongly urge TNC to reconsider the proposed sale in light of these issues.

Sincerely,

Regina Rodgers

Cc:

Paula Brill, Board of Directors, Desert Caballeros Western Museum

Tom Collazo, Director of Conservation, The Nature Conservancy

Michael Ettema, Director, Desert Caballeros Western Museum

Pat Graham, Director Arizona Chapter, The Nature Conservancy

Charles Kelly, Arizona Republic

Rob Marshall, Director of Science, The Nature Conservancy

Tracy McCarthey, Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Coordinator, Arizona Game & Fish

Steven J. McCormick, President and CEO, The Nature Conservancy

A letter many of us have received from the Nature Conservancy of Arizona

November 22, 2002

Dear Hassayampa River Preserve Friend,

Thank you for expressing your opinions and concerns regarding The Nature Conservancy's proposed collaboration with the Desert Caballeros Western Museum at our Hassayampa River Preserve. I am writing to assure you that we are carefully considering the thoughtful comments that you and others have voiced and to provide you with an update on our progress in exploring this option.

At our meeting in Wickenburg, in personal meetings, on phone calls and through correspondence, more than 100 people shared their thoughts with us on this proposal. To make sure we have captured all of them and that we have distilled the major concerns, we reviewed all of the individual comments and then categorized them by issue. The attached chart provides a summary for your reference and to guide us in our ongoing discussions with the museum.

No decisions have been made while our analysis continues and there is no written or verbal agreement with the museum at this time. We have discussed this project with our Board of Trustees and have their support in continuing the dialogue with both the museum and with those of you who have expressed your concerns about the proposed collaboration. If the Arizona chapter and the museum cannot come to a mutually agreeable solution to the major issues at hand, we will inform you of this decision. If it looks as if we can work through these issues and negotiate a mutually agreeable proposal, we will also inform you and, as promised, invite you to meet with us at an Open House on the preserve. We will notify you at least two weeks before that date. No final decision will be made before you have had an opportunity to meet with us at the Open House.

Again, thank you for sharing our interest in protecting the Hassayampa River Preserve and the lands and waters to which it is intimately tied. We value your involvement, and we hope you will continue to participate in this process.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Graham

State Director

The Nature Conservancy of Arizona

A message from your president...

The holiday season is coming up and I already have found that I should be at three different places on December 7th. That seems to be my usual predicament this time of the year. I will be going at least six Christmas Counts this month including two to Mexico.

I mentioned in the last newsletter that I hope that many of you would participate in at least one Christmas Count this year. Some of you have indicated that you didn't feel that you were a good enough birder to participate in a Christmas Count. The compilers would welcome your participation whatever your birding expertise. Look through the Christmas Count list in the last newsletter and give the compiler a call. If you have any questions give me a call.

I hope that many of you can make it to our December meeting. It's a real treat to have someone the calibre of Shawneen Finnegan presenting our program. Also, you can solve some of your Christmas gift problems solved. Bring your checkbooks. Shawneen will have some of her wildlife paintings for sale at the meeting.

Reading this newsletter you can see how concerned members of our chapter are with the sale of a portion of the Nature Conservancy Hassayampa preserve to the Desert Caballeros Western Museum. I think many of you can identify with most of the remarks listed on pages four and five that the Nature Conservancy has received. Many of us have written them and those of you who haven't should continue the pressure on the Conservancy by sending them a letter.

SAS Web Site: www.sonoranaudubon.org

Join Sonoran Audubon Society.....

New Adult or Family membership: \$20.00

Seniors and Students: \$15.00

Renewal fee for Students and Seniors: \$15.00

Mailed Newsletter subscription : \$8.00

Fee includes membership in the National Audubon and your local Sonoran Audubon Societies, and a subscription to the Audubon magazine. Your check should be made payable to the National Audubon Society, along with the membership form, preferably obtained from the Sonoran Audubon Society and containing our chapter ID number B07.

The Sonoran Chapter newsletter, Gambel's Tales, may be obtained free from the chapter website <www.sonoranaudubon.org>, or by subscribing for a mailed hard copy. Web site recipients will be notified when each newsletter is posted if the chapter has your e-mail address. Send your membership name and e-mail address to <chuckkan@mindspring.com>. If subscribing for a hard copy, send check (\$8.00), made payable to the Sonoran Audubon Society, to Sonoran Audubon Society, P.O. Box 8068, Glendale, AZ 85312-8068. Please include your address, and telephone number.

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The Magic of Cape May

Cape May is known to the general public as the oldest seashore resort in the country, and its quaint Victorian bed and breakfasts, beaches, and restaurants are jammed with summertime tourists. But as autumn approaches and the summer visitors head back to the cities, the birders arrive to watch migrants of all sorts on their way south for the winter. Join Shawneen as she explains why Cape May is such a fabulous birding location and relive with her some of the magical migratory movements she was fortunate to witness. America.

Shawneen Finnegan

By Chuck Kangas

For a number of years I've seen bird sightings on the Internet on the east coast by Shawneen. I had heard that she was an outstanding birder. Then, this spring, I noticed bird sightings by Shawneen from Tucson on the Internet. Also on the Internet there was a discussion of the world's outstanding bird artists and Shawneen was mentioned. I have a bird listing software called Bird Base. I had the program updated and mentioned Shawneen to Robert Eiseberg. She had developed Bird Area for him and he told me what an outstanding birder and bird artist she was. He also said that she was a wonderful speaker and gave excellent programs. I had our Program Committee contact her and she agreed to conduct our December program. How fortunate we are to be able to hear Shawneen!

**Written and Email Comments Regarding Proposed Desert Caballeros Western
Museum Transaction By The Nature Conservancy**

Comment and Category (listed in order of number of comments received by category)
<i>Habitat Protection</i>
“If you build it they will come”; impacts of increased visitation (noise, pollution, increased traffic, water consumption) on wildlife and habitat from the variety of activities proposed by the museum
Livestock will have negative impact on habitat quality, will be difficult to contain, attract Brown-headed Cowbirds and will create a negative image for TNC
Palm Lake too environmentally sensitive to sell – TNC should retain ownership of Palm Lake to protect
Support, in varying degrees, actions being taken to sell land and develop joint programs
Museum is not a land management or land conservation organization; incompatible mission
Concerns about how conservation easement conditions will be enforced, who will enforce and how
Proposed sale land currently provides buffer; buffer would disappear with intensity of museum activities
<i>Preserve Access</i>
How will museum provide access for birders (open earlier; fees, special entrance)?
Provide continued free access to visitor center and preserve trails by TNC members; general public still
How will volunteers still have access to shop and maintenance facilities if owned by museum
<i>Visitor Services</i>
Programs and services should be environmentally oriented (including the bookstore) and should present The Nature Conservancy’s message of habitat protection. Existing displays should remain and be
Who will staff and manage volunteers for the preserve; how will visitors be managed on preserve
Desert Caballeros Western Museum will provide good services
<i>Museum Operations</i>
The museum’s message of glorifying grazing, mining and farming is inappropriate; living history conceived; don’t need farm animals to create a living history museum
How will new buildings, parking lot affect archaeological sites?
Cultural education is a great idea but do it somewhere else
Will there be enough parking?

<i>Finances</i>
How will HRP benefit from sales financially; TNC guarantees for endowment?
Lease it, don't sell, keep control, control costs other ways
Concerns related to TNC willingness and motivation for sell property paid for by donations; focus on short term financial remedy
Does Museum have money to purchase property?
<i>Decision-making Process</i>
Process moving too fast; was not communicated well and members and supporters should have had more input in the beginning of the process
Why was deal kept secret? TNC wanted deal to go through without public scrutiny
Take steps to communicate better by making conservation easement public; establish an advisory board
Should have considered more compatible partner such as Audubon, ASDM, etc.
Feels it's a "done deal" but we're not saying so
How has Conservation by Design been used to decide to sell land at HRP
<i>Other</i>
Education an important component of TNC mission
Moral obligation to hold on to land
Save money by not giving away umbrellas, calendars or note cards
Springs are sacred
Chapter has been trying to shut down HRP for years
Many visitors have their first TNC experience at HRP
Will possible synergisms be worth environmental costs
Educational impact of HRP fantastic due to volunteers
Will drive a wedge between environmental community
Why does TNC need to sell the property to address the historical and cultural aspects
<i>General Comments</i>
Dropping membership
"You have greatly disappointed loyal followers who put their misguided trust in you"
Nature no longer comes first, sense of betrayal
Selling this land would be inconsistent with Nature Conservancy's philosophy
Taking us out of will be doing "terrible disservice", going to lose thousands maybe millions of members
Is there so much encroachment, that HRP is already endangered
Science should drive decisions
Are we sacrificing one place to save another?
Fact sheet well done
You are going to lose us "po'folk"
Management is out of touch with volunteers and donors
TNC management works for volunteers not the other way around

THE "TAMMY FAYE BAKER" BIRD

by George Wall

The birding trip to Peru (Oct 5-20, 2002) was a great success. At the age of 66, I had experiences and adventures that I'll probably never be able to duplicate. The most exciting of these was the night I went out to find the "Tammy Faye Baker" bird.

It was about 8pm, October 12th, when our birding trip leader Roger McNeill came by our room and said to me, "Can you be ready in 10 minutes?". Earlier in the evening I had told him that if he went out at night that I'd like to go along. My wife had no such thoughts as she thought I was crazy and maybe I was. A few minutes later, I along with Roger, Lucio the Explorama birding guide and another native guide also named Roger, walked off into the night-time jungle. I had a headlamp that allowed me to see where I was walking, but it was still very slippery and wet from previous rains. I kept my eyes glued to my steps and to the legs of Roger McNeill in front of me as I dragged up the rear and off we went to what I thought was some night owling. Little did I know what I was getting into.

Fifteen minutes later, I suddenly found myself flat on my back a little dazed. I had bumped into a tree limb that ran across the trail and it caught me right at the bridge of my nose. I shook my head, jumped up and caught up with Roger as I felt my nose and the blood dribbling down from the slight cut. From then on, I tried to keep one eye on the ground and the other on the head of who was in front of me so I wouldn't be surprised again.

One hour into our journey, the Indian guide Roger suddenly stopped and listened. We all heard a strange sound off in the distance and everyone got exited including me although I didn't know what for. The sound we heard at first seemed like an owl, but yet was different. The Indian guide pulled out his machete and started a new trail through the jungle. In my childhood fantasies, I always envisioned myself blazing new trails through the jungles as I recalled my favorite movie "Green Hell" with Douglas Fairbanks, Jr, but this was ridiculous. This was for real and at night in the Amazonian jungles of Peru!!

The next 20 minutes seemed like an eternity as we crashed through the jungle. At one point, the guide realized we had gone too far in one direction and we turned around and made our way back down the trail we had just blazed for a few yards when we took off on a different tangent. I fell or slipped three times – once climbing over a tree limb, once trying to crawl under one and the last time trying to scramble up a muddy incline. As I neared the top of this incline, I reached out for a small branch only to jerk my hand back very quickly. I had started to grab hold of a spiked palm branch that had more needles than any Arizona cactus. It would take a month before all of these pesky needles festered out of my fingers.

However, at last I was standing on this little knoll with the other three and listening to this weird sound coming from high above. Roger McNeill turned on the spotlight he had been carrying and beamed it up into the tall trees. I could barely make out something reddish brown sitting on a limb about a 100 feet up. I put my binoculars to my eyes and adjusted my lens and then readjusted several times trying to make out what I was seeing. I turned to Roger McNeill and asked "What is it?" He laughed and told me it was a Nocturnal Curassow, but I still didn't know what it was. He had mentioned this bird to me earlier in the week, one that he called the "Tammy Faye Baker" bird, but I never looked it up nor thought further about it.

Now as I looked again through my binoculars, I still couldn't believe what I was seeing. It looked like a huge chicken with large eyes, an orangish bill and a funny crest. It didn't look like it belonged up there.

After looking at this amazing creature for some time, we turned off the spotlight and headed back. Roger informed me that our Indian guide had seen this bird a year ago and hired him to try and find it again for us. I was further informed that it was a very rarely sighted bird and I was one of a select few amateur birders who had ever seen it. Needless to say it was a lifer for me and also for Roger.

I have to say, I was quite proud of myself when I returned to camp and entered my room late at night. Maria looked at me and made some unflattering comments about my appearance. Megan McNeill, Roger's wife in the next room yelled out to me "Do you look as bad as Roger does?" and I yelled back "Worse!!"



Nocturnal Curassow (26")

Fall 2002 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

Difficulty: 1 Morning only. Call leader for time and meeting place.

The Month of December is Christmas Count Time!

Check last month's newsletter for the various Christmas Counts. I was with several people on the Tres Rios count last year who had never been on a previous count. They had a wonderful time.

Saturday, January 11, 2003

Montezuma Well

Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623 977-7639
ercamp@juno.com

Montezuma Well about 90 miles north of Phoenix is a natural body of water fed by an eternal spring surrounded by desert scrub. Ancient Indians channeled the water for irrigation and lush riparian vegetation grows around the canals. American Wigeon winters here. Resident wrens, sparrows, and thrashers are prevalent. The entire scenic site is geologically and historically fascinating.

Difficulty: 2 (A steep climb to Indian ruins is optional.)

Bring Lunch.

Call leader for time and meeting place.

Friday to Sunday January 17 to 19, 2003

Bosque del Apache, New Mexico

Leader: Bob Bradley azbradley@earthlink.net

The highlights of a visit to this national wildlife refuge will be thousands of Sandhill Cranes and Snow Geese with some Ross' Geese to compare at close range. There is a chance to see the American Bittern and Swamp Sparrow (which the leader, coming from Colorado to do this for us, will try to "nail down" ahead) as well as many waterfowl and raptors.

You'll look for higher elevation woodpeckers and finches at Water Canyon nearby and unusual birds at Socorro. A Varied Thrush was seen here recently.

Difficulty: 1

Meeting time and place will be listed next month.

Saturday, January 18 OR Sunday, Jan. 19, 2003

Wings Over Willcox

Leader: Bill Grossi
bonasa@earthlink.net

Join an all day tour, "Plovers, Longspurs and Others," at the annual Birding Festival held in Willcox, Arizona. You'll visit grassland feeders around Sunsites and Chochise Stronghold Campground then drive through agricultural habitats looking for plovers, raptors, and whatever is there. Whitewater Draw should offer cranes, waterfowl, sparrows, buntings and the possibility of three quail species. Montezuma's Quail was there last year.

Use the Festival website: www.wingsoverwillcox.com for details and a complete schedule of Festival Events.

Save These Dates:

March 17-31, 2003

Oaxaca, Mexico

Leader: David MacKay

Contact: Daniela Yellan for more information at: dyellan@aol.com or 602-942-7791

For the second year we are excited to team up with High Lonesome Eco Tours to offer this very special tour to the Mexican state of Oaxaca! No other trip to Oaxaca offers such a range of habitats and opportunities to see this many species

The pace of our trip is relatively relaxed, but unlike some other tours that emphasize the city and valley of Oaxaca, we will be doing a fair bit of moving to get us to the wide variety of habitats available in the outlying regions of the state. To help lessen the chore of changing hotels, we have given ourselves multiple nights in the various locations.

None of the birding areas that we will visit on this trip will require anything more than casual walking, however there will be periods when we are walking for upwards of two miles at a leisurely pace, which may mean being on your feet for extended periods of time. There will be a couple of optional walks that are on steeper terrain; however the footing is never poor.

See last two newsletters for more detail

Calendar of Monthly Meetings...

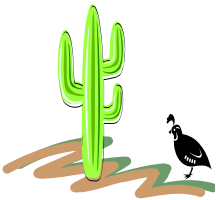
**Location: Auditorium, Glendale Public Library, 5959 West Brown Street
(one block south of Peoria Ave. & 59th Ave. intersection)**

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Dec 11, 2002	Shawneen Finnegan "The Magic of Cape May"
Jan 8, 2003	Southwest Forest Alliance "Old Growth Forever"
Feb 12, 2003	Rand Hubbell and Terry Gerber "An Overview of the Maricopa County Park System, With a Focus on Lake Pleasant"
Mar 12, 2003	Sandy Anderson, Director, Gray Hawk Nature Center "The San Pedro River-Avian Paradise"
Apr 9, 2003	TBA
May 14, 2003	TBA

Other Dates of Interest:

Dec 5, 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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