



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 6

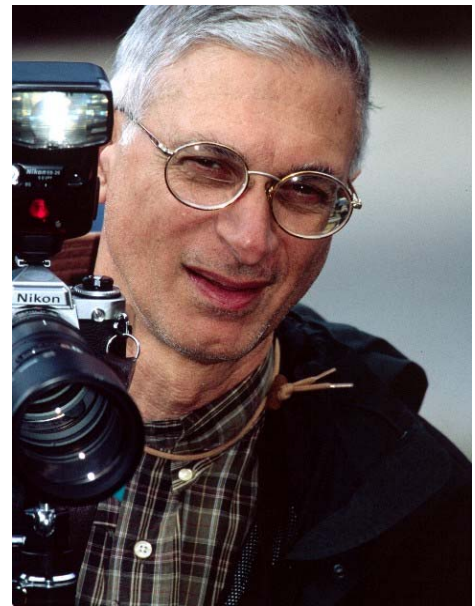
February, 2010

At our next meeting.... Wednesday, February 10, 2010 at 7 p.m.

Dominic Sherony: Color of Birds

There are fifteen mechanisms that give rise to all color in nature. Three of these are operative in the coloration of bird plumages. These mechanisms can combine in different ways and can function in different ways to give rise to the variations in intensity and spectrum of colors seen in bird plumages. The mechanisms will be discussed with examples of the various effects demonstrated.

Dominic Sherony was originally from the Chicago area but he and his family settled in Rochester, NY. He is retired after thirty-one years at Xerox Corporation as a manager and engineer. He has been an active birder since 1971 and his birding interests include listing, bird photography, observation, being active in the local bird club and applying his interests in analysis to birding questions. He has published about a dozen papers including three in ABA's *Birding* journal. He was a regional coordinator for New York State's second Breeding Bird Atlas program and is a member of the New York State Avian Records Committee and has been a regular volunteer at Brad-dock Bay Bird Observatory.



Dominic Sherony
Photo by B. Hallett

What's Happening in our Chapter?

By Your Editor, George Wall

The board met on January 6, 2010, and the committees gave their reports. It was noted that there are 720 SAS members which include "Friends".

A letter of support will be submitted for Avondale's Monument Hill preservation project.

Karen LaFrance will attend a panel discussion of private water companies at Acrosanti. Eleanor Campbell will attend an AZ American Water Company open house. Water conservation is a concern for all of Arizona.

The AZGFD-run Southwest Bald Eagle Management Committee is seeking financial support. A long discussion ensued in which it was decided that the group must present a solid fund strategy, including measures that would ensure contributed funds cannot be swept up by other state entities. John Arnett will contact them.

The General Membership meeting held on January 13, 2010, had the biggest turnout since I've been a member—70 people. What a pleasure it was to give the program to that many.

2010 Field Trips

REQUIREMENT: On all trips, **YOU MUST** make reservations by calling the leader. The leader can then give updated information as to the meeting place, times, etc. Also, some trips are limited in size.

Friday-Sunday, February 5-7, 2010

San Rafael Grasslands

Leaders: Melody Kehl & Donna Smith

623-556-9535 rms15247@cox.net

The Valley's beautiful wide-open high grasslands are best known for wintering raptors, pipits, sparrows and longspurs. Located east of Patagonia the valley is the headwaters for the Santa Cruz River. In the winter Savannah, Vesper and Grasshopper sparrows are common, less common are Baird's and flocks of Chestnut-collared and McCown's longspurs.

Melody Kehl will be our leader on Saturday for the valley. We will leave Friday for the Country Inn in Tucson and bird Sweetwater on the way down. We will be close to Madera Canyon and we can bird there on Sunday morning before heading back home.

Call leader Donna Smith for more information and meeting places.

Saturday, February 27, 2010

Glendale Recharge Ponds

Leader: Donna Smith 623-556-9535

rms15247@cox.net

These ponds have been a magnet for all kinds of water birds in the past year. Least Terns nested there this summer and who knows what we will find.

This will be a morning trip only. We will leave the Burger King just off 101 on Thunderbird Rd. at 8 a.m.

Saturday-Sunday, March 6-7, 2010

Tres Rios Nature and Earth Festival

Thursday, March 18, 2010

B&M/P.I.R. (where Tres Rios Festival will be held)

Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904

rashooler@cox.net

This is a trip designed to look for rails, bitterns and soras. We'll be getting there just about daylight in order to call these reed dwellers out into the open.

Difficulty: 1 Morning trip only.

Meet at the Burger King just off of 101 on Thunderbird to leave at 5:30 a.m. or meet at the site at 6 a.m.

Tuesday, March 30, 2010

Washington Park/East Verde River

Leader: Dan Bohlmann 602 938-8244

dansbohlmann@prodigy.net

This trip will include driving the Houston Mesa Road out of Payson which turns off of Highway 87 just a little ways north of town. It is paved for a short ways and then is a gravel and dirt road from then on. It runs for about ten miles heading north toward the Mogollon Rim. About half way to the Rim it runs alongside the East Verde river and then crosses it twice as well as another creek. There are lots of Sycamore and Cottonwood trees that line the river, lots of water and thus lots of birds. This is a great birding area that has the potential for variety of warblers, vireos, woodpeckers, flycatchers, phoebes, swallows and kingbirds. Also seen in this area are Western Tanagers, Summer Tanagers, Western Bluebirds, Bullock's Orioles, and a lot of birds that I haven't listed. We will stop at all the creek and river crossings as well as other places that look like they will be promising bird spots. I chose to do this trip during the week because on weekends the crossings are filled with fisherman, swimmers, picnickers and people also – too much noise for the birds to endure. After we stop at the crossings, we will go on to the little cabin community of Washington Park and take small sections of trails that follow creeks under the Rim in a small loop of under a mile which is heavily shaded by pines, oaks and maples. We should pick up a number of typical forest birds such as nuthatches, chickadees, titmice and creepers and who knows what else.

Difficulty: 3 Bring a Lunch.

Meet at Fry's Electronics Store, 31st Ave and Thunderbird in the parking lot on the north side of the building (N.E. corner) at 7 a.m.

Hassayampa River Preserve

Thursday, April 8, 2010

Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639

ercamp@juno.com

This is the Nature Conservancy Preserve near Wickenburg. You never know what you might find here in the way of birds that hide in the palm trees, mesquite, cottonwoods and willows.

Difficulty: 1 Morning trip only

Meet at the SW corner of the Bell Recreation Center in Sun City at 7:00 a.m. Take Boswell off Bell, go one block south. Arrange another meeting place with the leader.

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2010 Field Trips

Saturday, April 24, 2010

Page Springs

Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904 raschooler@cox.net

Page Springs is a fish hatchery where water also attracts many birds. There are also Arizona Sycamore and cottonwoods surrounding the water. Bridled Titmouse is a resident and Common Black Hawks nest regularly. There is a birding trail that is a part of the Page Springs Important Bird Area.

Difficulty: 1 Bring a lunch.

Meet at McDonald's just off Carefree Highway taking Exit 223 off Rte. 17 to leave at 6:00 a.m.



FAMILY BIRD WALKS AT ESTRELLA

Sponsored by the Sonoran Audubon Society

Estrella Mountain Park is located on the south side of the Gila River in Goodyear at Bullard Avenue and Vineyard Road. There is a variety of habitat such as mesquite, desert shrub and the Gila River.

SATURDAYS: These walks are held the second Saturday of each month. The next walk will be on Saturday, February 13, 2010. Meet at the visitor's center parking lot at 8:00 a.m. The walk will last approximately 2 hours. For further information, contact Rich Schooler at 623-930-8904, raschooler@cox.net.

SUNDAYS: These walks are held the fourth Sunday of each month. The next walk will be on Sunday, February 28, 2010, at 8:00 a.m. Follow the signs to the dirt parking lot on the east side of the park. For further information contact Bob McCormick at 602-373-2952 mcbo-baz@aol.com or Andrée Tarby at 480-948-1074 atarby@cox.net.

There is a \$6.00 per vehicle charge for entering the park; however, the bird walks are free of charge.

At the last Saturday walk, nine birders saw 35 species including 40-50 American White Pelicans. What a nice way to spend a Saturday morning.

Member Spotlight: Haylie Hewitt

Submitted by Eleanor Campbell



Haylie Hewitt

Haylie Hewitt is a relatively new Sonoran Audubon Society member but she has really jumped into birding. She took the Beginning Birding class given by the Desert Botanical Garden TWICE. Having attended SAS meetings for about a year she has contributed to the Ad Hoc Membership Committee, has energetically planted trees for National Public Lands Day, joined several field trips and will handle the hospitality table at meetings in 2010.

Haylie grew up in Oxford, Ohio, where she graduated from Miami University. She worked as an accountant for a while, but when she moved to her Arizona home she got her Masters Degree in Elementary Education.

Here she feeds the hummingbirds and puts out suet for woodpeckers in cool weather. Her yard sports three birdbaths. She's a true animal lover and shares her space with lots of cats, dogs, rabbits, a guinea pig and two desert tortoises. She rescued the tortoises from a bad situation and has taken a course on how to care for them.

She is a volunteer for Citizens for North Phoenix Strays and has helped "adopt out" feral cats into homes where they will be indoor cats.

It's great to have Haylie as a friend of SAS.

Reserva Ecologica El Uno, Janos, Chihuahua, Mexico Christmas Count Report

By Rich Schooler

On December 30 through January 2, John Arnett and Rich Schooler of Sonoran Audubon Society participated in the recent Christmas Count at the Nature Conservancy's (TNC) Reserva Ecologica El Uno located in northern Chihuahua near the town of Janos. The count has been going on since the mid-1990s and is situated on a former working cattle ranch.

Most of the area within the count circle consisted of grasslands with some scattered riparian areas, mesquite brushlands and a few stock tanks. We stayed in a former cowboy bunkhouse with a heater, a hot shower and a kitchen. It was cold, with early morning temperatures of 17 degrees F. The main ranch house was more comfortable with several nice bedrooms and a nice working kitchen. The TNC staff provided excellent dinners each of the three nights we were there including: Mexican barba-coa the first night, a roast turkey dinner the second night and a traditional New Year's Mexican posole on the third night.

We drove down to the "Reserva" on December 30 along with Carol Beardmore of the Sonoran Joint Venture and Chris Eberly who's with Department of Defense Partners-In-Flight. There were approximately 14 Americans and four Mexican participants on the count. The Mexican participants included a professor and three students from a university in Ciudad, Chihuahua. On December 31 the group went out scouting for the formal count which was held on January 1, New Year's Day.

A total of 96 species for the count day and 8 additional count week species were recorded. A total of 5,061 birds were recorded on the count day. This was down somewhat from previous years which have averaged in the range of 106 to 108 species. Most of the species recorded were those that we are familiar with here in Arizona. However, several were worth noting, including: Sprague's Pipit, Baird's Sparrow, several Short-eared Owls, and a Peregrine Falcon spotted as we were leaving the "Reserva" on January 2. In addition to the birding, we saw the herd of 23 bison recently relocated to the "Reserva" from the Black Hills of South Dakota.



John Arnett and Rich Schooler
Photo by Carol Beardmore

Carunculated Caracara

By Jerry Theis

Caracaras are birds of prey in the family Falconidae. Unlike the Falco falcons in the same family, caracaras are not fast-flying aerial hunters, but are comparatively slow and are often scavengers (a notable exception being the Red-throated Caracara). In general, they fill the role of crows or ravens of northern latitudes. The ten species of Caracaras include Black, Red-throated, Carunculated, Mountain, White-throated, Striated, Northern (Crested), Southern, Yellow-headed and Chimango. Caracaras are principally birds of South and Central America, with the Northern Caracara just reaching the southern United States in Arizona, Texas and Florida. On the other hand, the Striated Caracara inhabits the Falkland Islands and Tierra del Fuego, just off the coast of the southernmost tip of South America.



Carunculated Caracara

Photo by George Wall

The Carunculated Caracara is an attractive, boldly patterned caracara found at high elevations (3000-4000 m) in the Andes, locally common in paramo but also in nearby fields and cliffs in the drier treeless highlands. The adult is glossy black above with the crown feathers recurved. The bare wrinkled skin of the face and throat are orange-red, the bill and legs yellow. The underparts are black, conspicuously streaked with white, the belly and tail tip white. The juveniles are far less distinctive, being overall brown with dull pinkish-grey facial skin. In flight, the Carunculated Caracara's wings are rather long, the flight feathers black, narrowly tipped with white. It's flight is very strong; when windy, it often sails gracefully for long periods on set wings. This caracara often paces about on the ground, scavenging for almost anything edible. It is highly opportunistic, feeding on carrion and virtually any small animal it can catch. It generally occurs singly or in pairs.

The Carunculated Caracara resides in the Andes of NW South America, occurring in SW Columbia and Ecuador. I have seen this species on several trips to Ecuador, in January, 2001, high on Papallacta Pass and in November, 2009, at high altitude approaching the Guandera Biological Station in the NW Choco region. Both times it was a spectacular sight soaring gracefully on strong updrafts. It is neither extremely rare nor is its range extremely restricted. It is just fun when one is sighted to say "CARUNCULATED CARACARA!"

Gilbert Water Ranch

By George Wall

Did you know that Gilbert Water Ranch is shorter way of saying “The Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch in Gilbert, AZ”? The first time I went there was September 15, 2000, with Marshall Esty where we met Dwayne Fink. At that time the area was just called Gilbert Ponds and there was really only one pond with water in it and I wasn’t impressed. Dwayne led us around the pond and through a riparian area where new trees had just been planted. That morning we saw 27 species and according to Dwayne, that was a good amount. The best bird we saw was a MacGillivray’s Warbler, a “lifer” for me. Since then, I have recorded 11 trips.

It is a 110 acre facility with seven large shallow basins. The water fluctuates between the basins from time to time; so, you never know what basins you’ll have water in but usually the three main basins stay about the same. There is an eighth water area but this is the pond beside the library that is stocked with fish and kept full. The fishermen flock to this one but it holds very few birds because of the activity. There are good easy walking trails around the basins and you can spend a few hours walking them.

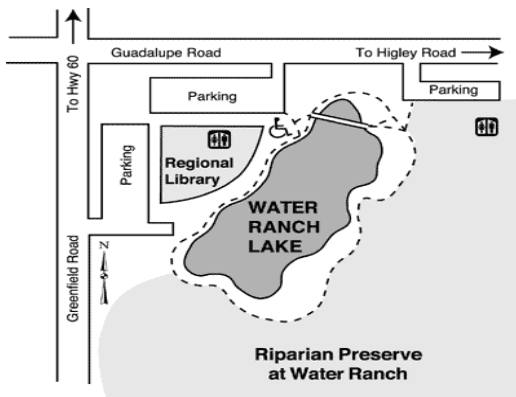
For a true bird watcher, it is best to go on a weekday. On weekends, there is usually a flood of scouts and lots of people walking the gravel paths including birders, photographers, joggers, strollers, and dog owners.

This wildlife area was open to the public in 1999 and since then more than 220 species have been reported. I don’t know how many I’ve seen but it has been a lot including some rarities like the Groove-billed Ani and the Streak-backed Oriole. Once in a while, you can see an escaped bird like the African “Go away bird” that I saw there. Of course, there is a small flock of Peach-faced Lovebirds that you can see every time you visit.

My last visit was last month on January 13, 2009, when Rich Schooler led 13 other bird watchers there. What a treat it was when we saw 62 species which is a far cry from the 27 species on my first trip there.

If you want more detailed information, I wrote an article in the January, 2007, edition of Gambel’s Tales.

The Gilbert Water Ranch is easy to get to as the map shows. It is located at the corner of Greenfield and Guadalupe Roads in Gilbert and there is ample parking. I would suggest parking at the second smaller parking lot on Guadalupe Road and start birding from there. If you’re not a bird watcher, it is also a photographer’s paradise.



Northern Shoveler
Photo by Vera Markham



Anna's Hummingbird
Photo by George Wall

Agua Fria National Monument 10th Year Anniversary

By George Wall

If you weren't there, you missed a fine outing. On Saturday, January 9, 2010, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Friends of Agua Fria, sponsored a great event. Audubon Arizona and our own Sonoran Audubon Society also had a significant role.

There were youth activities and educational exhibits that included American Indian dancers, authentic heritage crafts, arrow-head making, pottery and petroglyph education, watershed and wildlife education, food vendors, youth organizations, civic and environmental groups. The Sonoran Audubon Society had one of the tables where we passed out flyers, sold calendars and answered questions from the visitors. Karen LaFrance, Jerry Theis, Tice Supplee and I manned the table.

One of the highlights was artist Gary Bennett unveiling a commemorative landscape that he painted. He also signed prints that were available for a donation benefiting the Friends of the Agua Fria.

There was also a bird walk that started at 9 a.m. Karen LaFrance and Bob McCormick led the walk. However, over 100 visitors showed up for this event and so it was broken up into two huge groups of 50-60 people in each one. Some of the birds seen were Western Bluebirds, Meadow Larks and Bridled Titmouse.

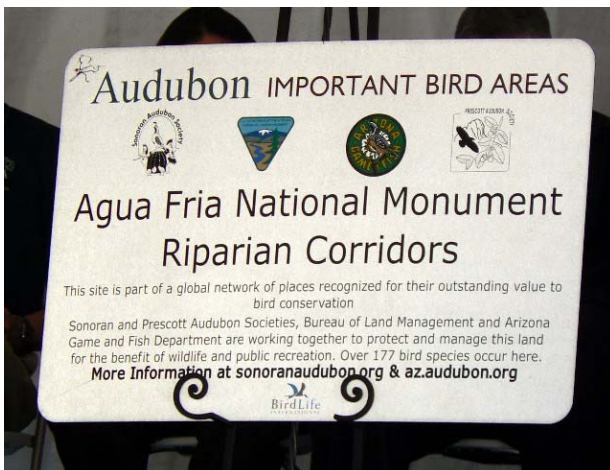
An attendance of 1,000 was anticipated; however, over 2,200 showed up. What a success!



Unveiled artwork—L-R: BLM Agua Fria NM Manager Rem Hawes, the artist Gary Bennett and Friends of Agua Fria past president Tim Flood - Photos by George Wall



Past SAS President Bob McCormick discussed the IBA - Photos by George Wall except lower right photo.



Bob McCormick and I unveiled this Agua Fria National Monument sign



George Wall staffing the table - Photo by Karen LaFrance

Are You a Writer?

I would love to have submissions to this newsletter from our readers. They have to be about the environment, nature, animals, birds—just about anything except fiction or poetry.



EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

13th Annual Great Backyard Bird Count (GBBC)

Takes place February 12-15, 2010. It's as easy as 1,2,3—doesn't cost money, makes a difference and is lots of fun. Visit the website at www.birdcount.org for easy-to-follow instructions. This event is sponsored by the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

Tres Rios Clean-up

At 7 a.m. on February 20, 2010, there is a pre-festival clean-up of the area.

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous has their monthly meeting on Friday, February 19, 2010, starting at 10:00 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City. The program will be on the Tres Rios Nature Festival.

The field trip for the month will be on Wednesday, February 17, 2010, to the Melinda Lane area where Thunderbird Park is located. It will be led by Carolyn Modeen.

For further information on Birders' Anonymous contact Marshall Esty at 623-977-1637 or at mne@juno.com.

Hassayampa River Preserve

February 20, 2010, there will be an Interpretive Nature Walk from 8:30—10 a.m.

Bird Banding: Saturdays, February 6th and 27th starting at 7 a.m. Newcomers welcome; However, if you want to help band, you must contact Anne Leight at ALEight@syntellect.com at least two days beforehand.

The preserve is open from Wednesday through Sunday 8

a.m. to 5 p.m. Entrance fees are \$5.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children. Members fee is \$3.00.

Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center

There are bird walks starting from the center every other Saturday from the Center. The February bird walks are on the 13th and 27th starting at 8:30 from the Center. Loaner binoculars are available.

Kathe Anderson will be teaching an intermediate birding class on February 7, 2010, from 8-11 a.m.

The Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center is located at 3131 S. Central Avenue in Phoenix. Call 602-468-6470 or e-mail riosalado@audubon.org for more information.

Desert Botanical Garden

Every Monday and the second Saturday of each month, there is a bird walk starting at 8:00 a.m.

Desert Botanical Garden entrance fees of \$15.00 (\$13.50 seniors) apply unless you're a DBG member. Membership is \$75 a year. When special events are held, the entry fee could be higher.

See their website at www.dbg.org for further information.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum

Bird walks for February are on the 6th, 14th, 20th and 28th. They start at 8:30 a.m.

Admission is \$7.50 for adults, \$3 ages 5-12. For driving directions or other details, call 520-689-2811 or visit their internet website at <http://arboretum.ag.arizona.edu/>.

Maricopa Audubon Field Trips

Saturday, February 6, 2010, Gilbert Water Ranch - Leader Cindy West 480-830-5332 quetzal@cox.net

Monday, February 15, 2010, Buckeye LeConte's Thrasher Site - Leader: Myron Scott 480-968-2179 gaia_3@netzero.com.

Saturday, February 27, 2010, San Pedro River - Leader: Laurie Nessel laurie@laurienessel.com, 480.968.5614 for reservations and information.

Festivals

Tres Rios Earth and Nature Festival, March 6-7, 2010. See www.tresriosnaturefestival.com.

Yuma Birding and Nature Festival, March 6-7, 2010. See www.yumabirding.com.

Verde Valley Birding and Nature Festival, April 22-25, 2010. See www.birdyverde.org.

Join the Sonoran Audubon Society

This can be done in two ways: become a friend of the Sonoran Audubon Society or join the National Audubon Society. The difference is as a "friend" all the money goes to our chapter. As a National member, you still become a member of our chapter, but only a percentage of the money goes to our chapter; however, you get the National Audubon Society Magazine. Some people choose to do both. See our website for the applicable forms.

New adult or family membership: \$20.00

Seniors and students: \$15.00

Renewal fee for seniors and students: \$15.00

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.

SAS Web Site: www.sonoranaudubon.org
Arizona Audubon Web Site: www.az.audubon.org
Desert Rivers Audubon Web Site:
www.desertriversaudubon.org
Maricopa Audubon Web Site:
www.maricopaaudubon.org
Arizona Field Ornithologists: www.azfo.org
National Audubon: <http://audubon.org/>

Sonoran Audubon Society Officers, Board Members and Committee Contacts:

Officers

President: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

Vice President: Karen LaFrance 602-788-9646

klaf@cox.net

Treasurer: Carol Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Secretary: John Arnett 623-695-0953

treerunner@yahoo.com

Board Members— Directors at Large

Tim Cullison, 602-863-9744 timcullisonaz@aol.com

Dick Fogle: 623-584-3922 rfogle@yahoo.com

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

Darnell Kirksey, 602-938-6174 dkirk38338@aol.com

Chuck Richards 623-594-6554 crichards15@cox.net

Rich Schooler 623-930-8904 raschooler@cox.net

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

Jerry Theis, 623-878-6528 jerry.theis@bannerhealth.com

Committees

Programs: Eleanor Campbell and George Wall—See phone numbers and e-mail addresses above.

Education: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904

raschooler@cox.net

Field Trips: Donna Smith 623-556-9535

rms15247@cox.net

Hospitality: Haylie Hewitt 623-581-1180

haylie.hewitt@cox.net

Publicity: Tim Cullison: 602-863-9744

timcullisonaz@aol.com

Membership: Charles Kangas 623-931-6677

chuckkan@mindspring.com

Newsletter: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net



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. for socializing and
7 p.m. for the start of the meeting and program.**

February 10, 2010: Dominic Sherony—Color in Birds

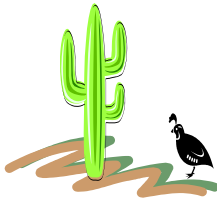
****March 10, 2010: Amanda Moors—Mexican Spotted Owl**

April 14, 2010: Tice Supplee—Adventures in Africa

May 12, 2010: Andrée Tarby— Australian Adventures

****Note: Special 10-15 minute presentation on Monarch butterflies by Gail Morris prior to regular program**

Other Dates of Interest: February 3, 2010, 7 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in small meeting room – all SAS members, friends and guests welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8068

Glendale, AZ 85312-8068