



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 5
January, 2010

HAPPY NEW YEAR

At our next meeting.... Wednesday, January 13, 2010 at 7 p.m.

George Wall: Birding in Galapagos Islands/Ecuador

George Wall began bird watching in April, 1997, when he started putting out feeders in his backyard in Montgomery, Alabama, for the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds that would come flying through each year and then he joined the Hummingbird Society. Purple Martins had a flyway through the area and so he put up Purple Martin houses and joined the Purple Martin Society and finally the National Audubon Society.

When he moved to Arizona in May, 1999, then he had become an avid bird watcher and then became a world-wide bird watcher by traveling around the U.S., Mexico, Canada, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Galapagos Islands, Nicaragua, Brazil, Argentina, Peru and Australia.

He is the President of the Sonoran Audubon Society, editor of their newsletter and on several committees. He was also the leader of the birding group "Birders' Anonymous" for 8 years in Sun City. Over the past few years, he has led numerous birding trips in Arizona and coordinated others outside of the United States.

On January 13, 2010, he will be giving a PowerPoint program on his adventures in the Galapagos Islands and Ecuador.



George Wall

What's Happening in our Chapter?

By Your Editor, George Wall

The board met on December 9, 2010, and the committees gave their reports with just minor changes from last month.

The final lineup of volunteers for the Gifts from Nature was made. (See page 6)

We agreed to participate in the Agua Fria National Monument event at Horseshoe Ranch on January 9, 2010, and a South Mountain Park event on February 20, 2010.

Bob McCormick gave a report on the IBA 2010 schedule and past IBA complete reports.

As in past years, \$500 will be donated and sent for the Tres Rios Bird and Nature Festival.

It was agreed that a reminder would be sent out to garner more Friends of the Sonoran Audubon Society. This would be in the form of letters to previous Friends and e-mails to all on our e-mail list.

We had a nice turn out for our Membership meeting. John Arnett did an excellent presentation on Why are Birds Important.

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.

Wednesday, January 13, 2010

Gilbert Water Ranch

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

The Gilbert Water Ranch is one of the Valley's better winter birding places. The ponds attract large numbers of ducks and shorebirds. There are many common permanent valley birds, plus lots of other winter migrants. The trails are well maintained, graveled and level. Fifty plus birds are usually seen or heard on trips to this site.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only.

Meet at east end of Walmart at 55th Ave. and Northern between the Walmart and Radio Shack stores at 7 a.m. Limit is 15 people.

Saturday, January 23, 2010

Chandler Veterans Oasis Park

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

The park is at the northeast corner of Lindsay and Chandler Heights Rd. in Chandler. There are several ponds and an education center with exhibits and trails that circle the various ponds which are similar to Gilbert Water Ranch. A recent visit turned up Killdeer, Black-necked Stilts, Pied-billed Grebes, Black-bellied Whistling Ducks and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, among other species.

Difficulty: 1

Meet at the Burger King just off of 101 on Thunderbird Rd. to leave at 7 a.m.

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](mailto:raschooler@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

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2010 Field Trips

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, titmouse 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.

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.



Binoculars for Birders

Submitted by Eleanor Campbell

Birders demand a lot from a pair of binoculars. Not only do we want to see all the detail in a bird's plumage, but we want the color bright and true. When you first shop for binoculars all the numbers and jargon can be confusing. Following are some basic facts about binoculars that may be helpful.

Types of Binoculars: There are two basic types of binoculars: Porro prism and roof prism. You can tell them apart by their shape. Porro-prism binoculars have an angled design. When standing on their barrels they appear to form an "M" shape. Roof-prism binoculars features two straight barrels giving it an "H" shape.

Binocular Anatomy: Binoculars are made up of a lot of parts, but you only need to know a few. The eyepiece (or ocular lens) is the lens closest to your eye. The objective lens is the lens closest to the object you are viewing. The focusing wheel is usually located along the center hinge.

The Numbers: The numbers written on the body of the binocular tell you much of what you need to know. What you'll see is: 7x35, 8.5x44, etc. The first number is the size of the binocular's magnification. With a 7x35 binocular the image is 7 times larger than what you see with the naked eye. Good birding binoculars range in power from 7x to 10x. The second number (35) refers to the diameter of the objective lens in millimeters. A larger objective lens takes in more light thus enhancing brightness and resolution of the image. Then larger the diameter of the objective, the more light will be allowed in and the more detail you can see.

Other Considerations: For birding close focus can be very important. It is the distance from which a near object can be observed and still remain in sharp focus. Ideally a pair of binoculars will focus on objects at 10 feet or even closer. Compact models usually have a good close focus, but you sacrifice brightness, power, and a field of view.

Optical Coatings: Optical coatings and lens quality are what create the wide variance in binocular prices. Looking at a pair of \$60 Bushnell Birders and a \$1,500 pair of Swaroski ELs, the numbers could be close, but you can see the difference when you look through the binoculars. Sophisticated manufacturing techniques, lens coatings, and fine quality lenses make a binocular expensive.

Remember technical information is not the only criteria for finding the right binocular for you. It needs to feel good in your hands, fit properly to your face, and have a comfortable weight. A tip: Try other peoples' binoculars when you're in the field birding.

About Feathers

The fact that birds are the only creatures that sport feathers intrigues many people. This fascination is tied to the power and beauty of the wing and, in turn, the wonder of bird's feathers. Besides the obvious function of bird feathers as tools of flight, feathers have many other important functions.

Functions of Bird Feathers

- Camouflage
- Protection from weather
- Identify a bird to others of the species
- Identification and to impress or locate a mate
- Bright-colored feathers on a male impress a rival
- Provide balance
- Insulate against cold
- Buoyancy for swimming
- Protect from water
- Enable a bird to fly

Keratin: Bird Plastic

Feathers are made of keratin, a protein substance like plastic. Keratin makes up the hard material of beaks, scales of feet, legs and talons, claws and after-shaft (quill part), rachis (the central shaft where the barbs are attached to the feather), as well as the interwoven sides of the feather called the vanes. Tiny barbs link the vane filaments together with barbules that lock the barbs together.

Melanin: Color

The colors in a bird's feathers are formed by melanin, a natural pigment of actual color, but some color results from the reflection and diffraction of light due to the structure of the feather. Melanin also helps strengthen the feather. As the feather wears, it loses color. These colors change according to the season and the bird's aging. Feathers are dull, streaked, mottled or faded more in the female bird to give her extra camouflage protection while she sits and tends a nest. Males are usually the brightest of the pair to ward off competitors and to attract the female.

Preening and Molting

Birds spend much of their time preening feathers, which is the straightening and cleaning of the vanes and the filaments. Old feathers come loose and molt as they begin to wear and need to be replaced. All birds shed feathers. Most molt only once a year, but some can molt twice a year (bobolinks, goldfinches, indigo bunting and scarlet tanagers), and a few species molt three or even four times a year. The ptarmigan is one of these birds.

While it is often disputed, some ornithologists claim that oil from the oil gland is spread by the bird on its feathers during preening to make them waterproof. Feathers themselves seem to be waterproof and so the bird sheds rain easily. It is known that birds need water for bathing in order to keep their feathers clean, dry, light and working correctly.

Growing New Feathers

When a new feather begins to grow through the bird's skin, the bird removes the sheath that covers it with his bill. The feather then unfurls and continues growing. It takes about two weeks for a feather to grow to its full length.

If a bird's feathers are pulled out, they will usually grow back fairly quickly. If a feather breaks off with a piece of the shaft still in place, the feather will not be replaced until the next molt.

Types of Feathers

Down Feathers: The short, soft feathers next to the bird's skin are down feathers. Down feathers have billowy, unconnected filaments. These are called semiplumes and protect the newly hatched bird from wet and cold. Ducks and geese keep an undercoating of down throughout their lives.

Powder-down Feathers: Waterfowl such as herons and bitterns have what are called powder-down feathers which form a powdery substance on some areas of the skin. The birds rub the powder over their plumage when they preen.

Contour Feathers: The most important feathers are the contour feathers, which include the body feathers, wing feathers that are pointed and have uneven vanes and tail feathers, which are the same on each side and have a rounded end.

Article by Elece Hollis from www.life123.com

The article also appeared in the November 2009 issue of the White Mountain Audubon Society

Financial Report—June - November, 2010

By Carol Schooler

INCOME:

Direct Public Support

Friends of SAS	664.99
National Audubon Dues Share	<u>2,052.75</u>
Total Direct Public Support	2,717.75

Indirect Public Support

Environmental Fund of Arizona	<u>1,090.37</u>
Total Indirect Public Support	1,090.37

Investments

Interest Income	<u>26.75</u>
Total Investments	26.75

Other Types of Income

Calendar Sales	160.00
Education Committee—Books and Tees	289.30
Newsletter Paid Postage	<u>40.00</u>
Total Other Types of Income	489.30

TOTAL INCOME 4,324.16

EXPENSE:

Board Retreat	346.00
Calendar Purchase	298.50
Chapter Operations	88.80
Education Committee (Books, etc.)	34.87
Hospitality	46.32
Liability Insurance	265.00
Mileage Reimbursement	431.75
Newsletter	130.44
Printing	94.85
SAS Outside Memberships	25.00
Speakers	200.00
Webmaster/Web Hosting	391.38

TOTAL EXPENSE 2,791.21

NET INCOME 1,532.95



Blackish Tapaculo

By Jerry Theis

Tapaculos are small to medium sized birds, with a total length ranging from 4-9 1/2 in. They are terrestrial species that fly poorly on their short wings (often referred to as "feathered mice.") They have strong legs, well-suited to their habitat of grassland or forest undergrowth. The tail is cocked and pointed towards the head, and the name tapaculo possibly derives from Spanish for "cover your behind."

While the majority of the family is small blackish or brown birds, there are some larger and more colorful species. They are best located and identified by their vocalizations, which may consist of a repetitive whistle, buzz, squeak, trill, or unk note. Tapaculos feed on insects, seeds and other soft plant material with their pointy bills, and will scratch on the ground like a pheasant. Most species lay two or three white eggs in a covered location.

Being poor fliers, tapaculos easily become isolated in small populations. The various species are difficult to distinguish even in the hand and the number of species is still unknown, although most texts identify approximately 60 species, including Huet-Huet's, Crescent-chest's and Bristlefront's. Tapaculos are most closely related to gnatcatchers and ground ant-birds.

Tapaculos are found only in the New World and are most diverse in the southern third of South America. On a recent trip with three friends to the Choco region of northwest Ecuador, I saw the Blackish Tapaculo, along with Choco and Narino Tapaculos. Seeing a Tapaculo well involves tape playback, being extremely quiet, and a lot of luck!



Blackish Tapaculo
Photo from Wikipedia

Gifts from Nature
By George Wall



Tim Cullison and Ann Durning at the checkout table



Chuck & Loretta Richards at the Audubon Arizona Table



Darnell Kirksey and Suzanne Cash and entrance table



John Arnett was an assistant to all the artists who needed help



Susan Boyes was one of the artists

The Gifts from Nature event sponsored by Audubon Arizona and manned by volunteer help from the Sonoran Audubon Society and others was a success considering our current economy. Total money to the artists was \$12,194. Audubon Arizona made some money as did SAS.

Other volunteers from the Sonoran Audubon Society not pictured are Dick Fogle, Joe and Elise Ford, Niles Keeran, Karen LaFrance, Rich and Carol Schooler, Andrée Tarby, George and Maria Wall.



Bird Guide

By George Wall

I recently picked up a small bird guide entitled Land Birds Bird Guide – Song and Insectivorous Birds East of the Rockies by Chester A. Reed. It was dated 1909. I had found it in one of the many yard sales in and around Sun City.

After getting home, I looked it up on the internet, I found that it continued to be printed up into the 1950s. What a fascinating treat!

The first bird shown in the guide was a Carolina Paroquet that stated it was now confined to the interior of Florida and Oklahoma. The 7th bird in the guide was the Ivory-billed Woodpecker. It showed the range in portions of Florida and, possibly, Indian Territory.

As I continued to look through the 228 pages of the guide, I was amazed at how some of the names have changed or were combined over the years.

Texas Kingfisher (now called Green Kingfisher), Southern Downy Woodpecker (now called Downy Woodpecker), Texas Woodpecker (now called Ladder-backed Woodpecker), Artic Three-toed Woodpecker & American Three-toed Woodpecker (both now the Three-toed Woodpecker), Merrill-Paraque (now called Common Pauraque), Arkansas Kingbird (now called Western Kingbird), Derby Flycatcher (now called the Great Kiskadee from Mexico), Gray-crowned Leucosticte (now called Gray-crowned Rosy Finch). Western Goldfinch (now called the Lesser Goldfinch), Snowflake (now called Snow Bunting), Ipswich Sparrow (now a subspecies of the Savannah Sparrow—at the time of the printing the Savannah Sparrow was a subspecies of the Ipswich Sparrow), and the last entry in the guide was a Greenland Wheatear (now called the Northern Wheatear.)

I could go on and on, but you get the idea. The guide was only 5 ½ by 3 ¼ inches and in very good condition considering the age. It was a real bargain for \$1.00 and what a trove of old information it held.



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. This riparian area consists of exposed shorelines, mature trees, the occasional marsh surrounded by desert scrub hillsides and in the park itself, many mesquite, palms and other trees.

SATURDAYS: These walks are held the second Saturday of each month. The next walk will be on Saturday, January 9, 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, ra-schooler@cox.net.

SUNDAYS: These walks are held the fourth Sunday of each month. The next walk will be on Sunday, January 24, 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 mcbobaz@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.

EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous has their monthly meeting on Friday, January 15, 2010, starting at 10:30 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City. The program will be given by George Wall on certifying backyards with the National Wildlife Federation.

The field trip for the month will be on Wednesday, January 7, 2010, to the Avondale Recharge Plant led by Donna Smith.

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

Hassavampa River Preserve

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.

Rio Salado Habitat

Winter Waterfowl Walk, Saturday, January 2, 2010, from

7:30-9:30 a.m. at 2439 S. Central Avenue in Phoenix. Call 602) 262-6863 or (602) 262-6713 for more information. The program number is 60235.

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

This is always a good birding spot. In December, Rufous-back Robins, a Pyrrhuloxia and Crissal Thrashers were seen.

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

Wednesday, January 6 Camp Creek and Seven Springs - Leader: Russ Widner, 480.595.2977 or rwidner@earthlink.net for information and reservations.

Saturday, January 16 Tres Rios - Leader: Marcelline Vandewater. Please e-mail marcelline@ermaroni.net or call 602-689-4356 for reservations and information.

Tuesday, January 26 Arnette and Queen Creeks - Leader: Laurie Nessel laurie@laurienessel.com, 480.968.5614 for reservations and information.

Festivals

Wings Over Willcox, January 13-17, 2010. See www.wingsoverwillcox.com.

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 rpfogle@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:

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.**

January 13, 2010: George Wall—Birding in Galapagos Islands/Ecuador

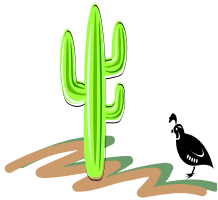
February 10, 2010: Dominic Sherony—Color in Birds

March 10, 2010: Amanda Moors—Spotted Owl

April 14, 2010: Tice Supplee—Adventures in Africa

May 12, 2010: Andrée Tarby— Australian Adventures

Other Dates of Interest: January 6, 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