



Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 2

October, 2009

At our next meeting.... Wednesday, October 14, 2009 at 7 p.m.

Dr. Gerald Rosenthal: Sonoran Desert Life

Dr. Gerald A. Rosenthal, a retired Professor of Biological Sciences and Toxicology, earned his doctoral degree in Botany from Duke University. Dr. Rosenthal spent his career engaged in distinguished research and teaching in Botany and Plant as well as Insect Biochemistry: topics on which he has authored several highly regarded technical treatises and numerous research articles in scientific journals.

He has traveled the world for nearly four decades observing and photographing its major plant communities. A resident of Scottsdale, Arizona, he has lived in, hiked, and studied the Sonoran Desert for more than 11 years.

He wrote a book entitled "Sonoran Desert Life" which was highlighted in the Arizona Republic not long ago. The book has more than 400 photographs showing the complexity of the Sonoran Desert and its plants, insects, birds and other wildlife.

If you are interested in desert life, this program should be a must.



HAVE YOU MISSED OUT?

By George Wall

I send out several e-mails during the month for the Sonoran Audubon Society with updated information on bird walks, our programs, trip reports and information that is related to birds and conservation.

We have over 600 people in our chapter, but I only have 175 e-mail addresses. If you have missed out, it's because I don't have your e-mail address.

To get in on the "know", send your e-mail address to gwall5@cox.net or call me at 623-875-7057. I don't want you to miss out.

What's Happening in our Chapter?

By Your Editor, George Wall

Again, our chapter has had a busy month. See all the "Retreat" information in this issue.

Final preparations for our annual picnic are under way, but we need you to sign up for this event.

The annual reports were submitted to the National Audubon Society thanks to Karen LaFrance. This in turn generated \$1997.75 to be deposited in our chapter's account based on our membership.

If I counted right, we had 41 show up at our last meeting.

2009 Field Trips

REQUIREMENT: On all trips, **YOU MUST** make reservations by calling the leader.

Friday-Monday, October 2-5, 2009
San Diego Pelagic & Land Birding
Leader: Rich Schooler 623-930-8904
raschooler@cox.net

This trip is booked full.

Sunday, November 15, 2009
Robbins Butte Birding & Annual Picnic
Contact: George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net

This will be our Annual SAS Picnic and at the same time for those who want to, a birding trip. The birding trip will start at 7 a.m. at Robbins Butte. The picnic will start at 11 a.m. and go until 1 p.m.

Robbins Butte is a Wildlife Area administered by the Arizona Game & Fish Department. We've had trips here twice before and the last time we saw a Bald Eagle soaring above us. We should see about 35-45 species.

Difficulty: 1

Sign up at the meetings or let contact know.

Wednesday, November 18, 2009
Tres Rios Wetlands
Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639
ercamp@juno.com

The Tres Rios Wetlands Project located at the 91st Ave. Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Salt River is a haven for many bird species. Habitats there include open water, running stream, marsh, desert and woodland which provide a good environment for ducks, shorebirds, and passerines. Highlights on previous trips were sightings of Black-bellied Whistling Duck, Least Bittern, Sora, Osprey, Peregrine Falcon and White-faced Ibis.

Difficulty: 1 Morning only.

Call the leader to arrange the meeting place and time.

FAMILY BIRD WALKS

By Rich Schooler

The Sonoran Audubon Society Family Bird Walks will start on October 10, 2009. The Family Bird Walks will be held the second Saturday of each month starting in October and continuing through April at the Estrella Mountain Park located at Bullard Avenue and Vineyard Road. The bird walk will begin at 8:00 a.m. and last about 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Meet at the Visitors Center parking lot. There is a \$6.00 per vehicle charge for entering the park; however, the bird walks are otherwise free of charge.

Why are birds important?

John Arnett, Secretary, Sonoran Audubon Society

I need your input for the monthly program at our Sonoran Audubon meeting in December. I'll give a talk called "Why are birds important?" and I want you to tell me why you think birds are important. Your input will help me build the program, but your response will remain completely anonymous. Please keep your answer to 60 words or less, and e-mail it to me at treerunner@yahoo.com by **October 15, 2009** (sooner is better). **IMPORTANT** – write "Why are birds important" in the Subject line so I do not discard your e-mail as spam. All of our monthly programs are 'for the birds', but this one is also for (and by) you! Thank you, and see you in December.

Owl Pellet Education

By Dean Luehrs

Pat McConnell, a 6th grade teacher at Thompson Ranch School in the Dysart District, wanted to have a unit on owl pellets, but her budget did not permit purchasing the pellets (they can run \$2 and up each).

Joan and Dean Luehrs heard of her project and since one of the objectives of the Audubon Society is education, they started collecting the pellets at the old Arlington School site (the site is no longer available). Pat McConnell and her husband Bob helped on one trip where there were a number of pellets nestled in needles under a large pine tree waiting to be gathered like an Easter egg hunt. The great horned owl responsible for the pellets even flushed out of the tree while we were gathering them.

The students had a great time dissecting the pellets and identifying various bones of small rodents and beaks and feet of birds. Pat reports that this and similar projects in previous years were the most interesting and memorable of the activities of the year for the students.

Owl Pellets
Photo from Internet



SAS Planning Retreat 2009

By Karen LaFrance

Sonoran Audubon's Board Planning Retreat took place on Saturday, September 5, 2009, at Hassayampa Preserve. The AM BIRDWALK yielded 39 species. The Morning Session was from 9:00 a.m. – 12 Noon; we broke for a non-working lunch and then reconvened in the afternoon from 12:15 p.m. to 2 p.m..

Attending were George Wall, Tim Cullison, Eleanor Campbell, Bob McCormick, Donna Smith, John Arnett, Rich Schooler, Carol Schooler, Darnell Kirksey, Chuck Richards, Loretta Richards, Jerry Theis, Andrée Tarby, Karen LaFrance (facilitator) and first time attendees: Rosemary Zanter, Haylie Hewitt and Joe Ford.

George memorialized the occasion with a group picture and a picture of himself, as President, with Haylie, Rosemary, and Joe.

What SAS did this past year that the group really liked included improved numbers of participants at monthly membership meetings and family bird walks at Estrella Mountain Park, the conservation message in publications and photo contest with the 10 birds of conservation concern, the store meeting its expenses—great work Education Committee...and four grants received in the past year.

The four grants are: two Together Green grants in national competitions (Toyota with National Audubon Society) for a total of \$15,000; one Arizona Bird Conservation Initiative (ABCI) grant of \$2,525 from AZ Game and Fish Department for IBA monitoring and UAFWP travel and \$600 from National Audubon Society's Chapter Collaborative Grants toward purchase of equipment for education. Karen LaFrance, SAS VP, is SAS' lead grant writer & contract monitor.



The Together Green Grants: Putting Sonoran Audubon on the national map of Audubon Chapters are:

“Together Green Innovation Grant” of \$5,000 for Community Planning in the Upper Agua Fria Watershed, Yavapai County. This awarded grant is one of only four in the country through the TG Innovation Grant application process. The grant will fund a community outreach worker and facilitator in rural Yavapai County, public meetings around water issues and the development of special projects to improve the Agua Fria River. The need was developed through SAS' participation in the Upper Agua Fria Watershed Partnership which meets monthly at Arcosanti. Karen LaFrance with Rich Schooler are coordinators.

Karen LaFrance received the “Together Green Fellowship Grant” for \$10,000. There are 40 National Fellows out of 130 applicants; half of the Fellows are Auduboners and half are non-Auduboners in this second year of the Fellowship. The SAS project, over 18 months, is to create a training/education venue for Audubon chapter leaders in the Intermountain West. The idea for the project came from Karen's attendance in summer 2008 at NAS' Hog Island Leadership Camp (now suspended due to funding issues) and from the desire of the Arizona Audubon Council (all the AZ chapters and Audubon Arizona) to have a training event in Arizona (from their retreat in October 2008). Karen will be coordinating with other chapters, NAS state offices and NAS staff to implement the project. At least one half of the grant is a stipend for the Fellow plus project expenses.

The group went into three Break Out Sessions to discuss Issues and “Who Does What by When”. The subjects were: Horse-shoe Ranch, a potential acquisition in the Agua Fria National Monument by Arizona Game and Fish; Important Bird Areas, a long term conservation project of the chapter, and what's next in the Education area.

You can find the details of discussion and verbatim notes on the SAS website and by clicking for the notes.<http://www.sonoranaudubon.org/AboutUs.html> and click on PDF or Word version.

The group completed its planning for the day by “Putting Conservation into SAS Programs and Initiatives for 2009-2010”.

Subjects discussed were: How do we know we are making a difference? What are the “metrics” of success? Criteria for SAS volunteering for other Audubon chapters/centers/events; the need for Advocacy and liaison with the Arizona Game & Fish Department staff and commission; and “Getting more people committed to volunteer tasks for SAS”—SAS always needs more “heavy lifters”. On this last issue, the Board appointed Darnell, Haylie and Jerry as an ad hoc committee which will report back to the Board on a plan to address this need which is “chronic” and, at the same time, at the heart of the chapter's success.

Annual Retreat Pictures—Photos by George Wall



L-R: Joe Ford, Eleanor Campbell, Darnell Kirksey, Bob McCormick, John Arnett, Karen LaFrance, Andrée Tarby and Tim Cullison



L-R: Donna Smith, Chuck Richards, Loretta Richards, Haylie Hewitt, Rosemary Zanter, Rich Schooler, Carol Schooler and Jerry Theiss

Neighborhoods Bulldozed—Some Lucky Residents Moved to Custom Homes

By Bettina Bickel

Across the Valley, residents are losing their homes to the bulldozer. Thanks to Wild at Heart, some of these residents are being moved to custom-made underground homes. Of course, we are talking about burrowing owls, which are unique among owls in making their homes underground.

Burrowing owls occupy open plains, grassland, and desert scrub habitats throughout most of the western and prairie states of the United States. They establish small colonies in the deserted burrows of prairie dogs, tortoises, or other burrowing animals. Burrows are often lined with grass, weeds, and dung. Often seen perched on a fence post or the top of a mound, they hunt small rodents, insects, and occasionally snakes and birds. They are active day and night, but are less active during the peak of the day.

Nesting begins in mid-March. The altricial nestlings fledge after about 28 days. Since nestlings spend their time underground, they are particularly susceptible to being buried alive when development takes over their home.

Loss of habitat to agriculture and urban development is a major threat to burrowing owl populations. Persecution of rodent populations has also taken a toll on burrowing owls. Prairie dogs in particular are a keystone species in grassland habitats; fortunately AZGFD is restoring this ecosystem engineer to suitable habitats from which it was previously extirpated.

When impending development threatens a burrowing owl colony, Wild at Heart begins their rescue and relocation process. Owls are trapped at burrow entrances or by being lured into traps containing mice. Nestlings may be brought out of the burrow by hand, a daring move since their distress call is indistinguishable from a rattlesnake's warning buzz! The owls are then relocated to burrows built by Wild at Heart volunteers using PVC pipe. A temporary mesh enclosure and food deliveries encourage the owls to settle in to their new home.

Protecting grassland and desert scrub habitats from development and restoring native rodent populations are priorities for burrowing owl conservation. When relentless development overtakes their homes, the efforts of Wild at Heart and volunteers help to ensure that these fascinating owls continue to be our neighbors in the Phoenix area



Burrowing Owl—Photo by Shirley Ramaley

Gray-headed Chickadee
 By Dr. Jerry Theis

Switching gears this month, I will focus on a North American bird, widely considered the most difficult breeding bird to see in North America, the Gray-headed Chickadee (formerly called Siberian Tit).

Chickadees are small, contrastingly-patterned birds with strong legs (allowing upside-down foraging), and short, strong bills. Found in small flocks, they are social and inquisitive. They feed on insects and seeds gleaned from bark and twigs. Flight is undulating. They nest in birdhouses or tree cavities.

The Gray-headed Chickadee is a fluffy-brownish bird of the far north, found in North America only at the tree line in riverside alder and spruce thickets in northern Alaska and Canada. It is North America's largest and longest-tailed chickadee.

In June, 1998, I joined Bob Dittrick of Wilderness Birding Adventures. We departed Fairbanks, Alaska, in a three-seater bush plane, landing on a tundra "airfield", high in the Brooks range in northeastern Alaska. After several days of hiking through hilly tundra and fording deep, ice-cold rivers from our tent-camp in grizzly country, we found a Gray-headed Chickadee at an active nest cavity in a small willow tree. What a thrill! Seeing such a rare breeding bird, and cognizant of the effort required, made this one of my most treasured birding adventures.

Years ago, this bird was most reliably found by staying at a hunters' cabin, waiting for the chickadees to feed on the insects attracted to animal hides hung out to dry and cure. Bob currently guides boat trips into the areas with willow thickets to search for the chickadee.



Picture is from the Mangoverde World Bird Guide
 Photo was taken by Giuliano Gerra & Silvio Sommazzi

Treasurer's Report—Trial Balance as of August 31, 2009

Submitted by Carol Schooler

	<u>Debit</u>	<u>Credit</u>
Meridian Bank	2,941.97	
Meridian Savings	8,515.27	
Unrestricted Net Assets		11,564.40
DIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT:Friends of SAS		20.00
DIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT:NAS Dues Share		55.00
INDIRECT PUBLIC SUPPORT:Environmental Fund of AZ		528.27
INVESTMENTS: Interest Income		16.07
Calendar Exp	298.50	
CHAPTER OPERATIONS:Chapter Expenses	80.00	
Mileage Reimb-IBA (.44)	114.40	
Mileage Reimb-SAS	28.60	
Speakers	100.00	
Website:Web Master	105.00	
Totals	<u>12,183.74</u>	<u>12,183.74</u>

THIRD ANNUAL PICNIC FOR THE SONORAN AUDUBON

Will be held Sunday, November 15, 2009, from 8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Robbins Butte Wildlife Area which is located approximately 7 miles SW of Buckeye just off of Highway 85.

The early birds will be birding the area which has lots of birds. The picnic will start at 11 a.m. for those who don't want to bird.

This is a free event and open to all Sonoran Audubon Society members/friends and their guests.

The Sonoran Audubon Society will furnish the main items - hot dogs, hamburgers, buns, condiments, drinks, plates, etc.

It would be nice if families brought a side dish like baked beans, salad or a dessert.

To facilitate how much food is needed, you need to register for this event by using the sign-up sheet at the front table at the General Membership meeting. You can also call George Wall at 623-875-7057 or e-mail him at gwall5@cox.net and let him know how many will be attending.

GIFTS FROM NATURE

By George Wall

Each year Audubon Arizona hosts a "Gifts From Nature" fund raiser. This will be the second year of this event. Audubon Arizona gets a percentage of the sales. Last year Desert Rivers Audubon Society helped with this event. We are handling it this year.

The event is scheduled for Friday and Saturday December 11-12 at the Cattle Arts Compound. That's at the corner of McDonald And Miller Roads that immediately turns into Cattle Track Road I've been to this event the past two years and it was a treat to look at all the art for sale.

On Friday it will be a VIP event and help will be needed from 4-10 pm. On Saturday it will be a public event and help will be needed from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The Friday VIP event has a \$25 entrance fee for the advanced sale and artist reception. The Saturday public sale will have music, food vendors and 30 artists and has a suggested donation of \$4 each. Naturally, volunteers do not pay.

This event will require some set-up, manning of attendance tables, parking lot assistance, runners for the artists, food and beverage service and the main job is check-out. Based on this, we need about 12-15 people both days.

For doing this, along with some financial work, which we already have a volunteer for, our chapter will receive \$1,000 and money is something we could use in order to do the things we want to do.

We have accepted Audubon Arizona's request to do this work. Now we just need people to volunteer. We had a sign-up sheet at the September meeting and it will again be passed around at the October meeting. However, you may want to just send in your name, phone number and e-mail address to me, George Wall at gwall5@cox.net, and volunteer for one or both dates. For those who volunteer, I'll send you a map and address of where the Cattle Track Arts Compound is located. I've put the address below for your information.

Cattle Creek Arts Compound

6105 N. Cattle Track Road, Scottsdale, AZ, 85250-4605

EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous, a group of bird-watchers, has their next meeting on Friday, October 16, 2009, starting at 10 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City. Kathy Wise, Education Director for Audubon Arizona, will be giving the program.

On Thursday, October 22, 2009, Eleanor Campbell will lead a bird walk to Tres Rios.

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

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 \$55 a year. When special events are held, this could be higher.

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

Hassayampa River Preserve

Bird Banding: Saturdays, October 10th at 6:30 a.m. and 31st starting at 7 a.m. **However**, you must contact Anne Leight at ALeight@syntellect.com at least two days beforehand.

Entry Fees: \$5, TNC members \$3, kids 12 and under are admitted free.

Boyce Thompson Arboretum

This arboretum always has some nice walks. Check out the website listed below. Starting this month, the hours are 8 a.m. until 5 p.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

Sunday, October 4, Sabino Canyon. Leader: Richard Kaiser (602) 276-3312 or rkaiserinaz@aol.com

Saturday, October 24, Sunflower and Bushnell Tanks. Leader: Scott Burge, 480.968.5141, burge@burgenv.com for reservations

See all of their trips at www.maricopaaudubon.org

Community Grand Opening of the Nina Mason Pulliam Rio Salado Audubon Center on Saturday, October 10th, 10am - 2pm!

The center is located at 3131 S. Central Avenue in Phoenix (Immediately south of the Salt River).

10 a.m.—Welcoming remarks and refreshments.

11 a.m.—2 p.m.—Nature activities for all ages.

This is free of charge, but please help them in planning by letting them know if you will attend. Call 620-468-6470 or e-mail riosalado@audubon.org.

Come on out and join in the Celebration!

Pitch-in for Pollinators!

By John Arnett

The Department of Defense (DoD) Legacy program has teamed with National Public Lands Day to sponsor habitat enhancement projects on DoD lands around the country. This year's project theme is Pollinators, and I'm inviting you to pitch-in for pollinators at the Gila Bend Air Force Auxiliary Field (AFAF) on Saturday, November 7, 2009.

The Gila Bend AFAF has a small nature trail and we want to make it a valuable resource for resident and migratory birds, bats, and insects. We'll install irrigation and electrical lines, plant shrubs and trees, pull a few invasive weeds, improve our interpretive trail signs, and learn about the importance of providing habitat for resident and migratory pollinators in the Sonoran desert.

For more details and to sign up, e-mail me at john.arnett@luke.af.mil or call 623-856-8491.

Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO)

AZFO will hold their annual meeting in Tucson, AZ, Friday-Sunday, October 23-25, 2009. There will be lectures by noted ornithologists. A Saturday evening's dinner at El Parador features guest speaker, Rick Taylor, Director of Borderland Tours.

Saturday's meeting will be held at the Du Val Auditorium (room 206), University of Arizona Health Sciences Center, 1501 N. Campbell Ave. in Tucson.

There will be field trips on Friday afternoon and Sunday morning.

There is a \$10 fee for non-AZFO members. The dinner is \$25. To register, go to: http://azfo.org/annual_meetings/2009/meeting_2009.html.

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.**

All meetings are on Wednesday night except the November 9th meeting.

October 14, 2009: Dr. Gerald Rosenthal—Sonoran Desert Life

MONDAY—November 9, 2009: Kenneth "Tuk" Jacobson—Bald Eagles

December 9, 2009: John Arnett—Why are Birds Important?

January 13, 2010: Doug Alexander—Birding in New Zealand

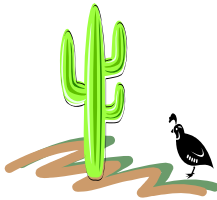
February 10, 2010: Dominic Sherony—Color in Birds

March 10, 2010: Amanda Moors—Spotted Owl

April 14, 2010: Tice Supplee—Adventures in Africa

May 12, 2010: George Wall—Birding in Galapagos Islands/Ecuador

Other Dates of Interest: October 7, 2009 7 p.m. Board Meeting at Glendale Library in small meeting room – all SAS members welcome.



Sonoran Audubon Society

P.O. Box 8068

Glendale, AZ 85312-8068