

Gambel's Tales

The Newsletter of the Sonoran Audubon Society

Volume 11 Issue 3

November, 2009

At our next meeting.... Monday, November 9, 2009 at 7 p.m.

Kenneth "Tuk" Jacobson: Bald Eagles

In 1967, the Bald Eagle was declared endangered and became one of the first species protected after Congress enacted the Endangered Species Act in 1973. In 1995, it was moved from endangered to the less protective threatened category under the Endangered Species Act. In 2007, the Interior Department said the eagle had recovered sufficiently to be removed from the protection of the Endangered Species Act and it was taken off. The Bald Eagle is currently protected under other laws.

Kenneth "Tuk" Jacobson is currently the Bald Eagle Management Coordinator for the Arizona Game and Fish Department. A graduate from the University of Arizona with a B.S. in Wildlife and Fisheries Science, he has been heavily involved with raptor related research projects across the United States which included Hawaii and also in Puerto Rico. Since 2002, he has concentrated more on the Bald Eagle.

Because of people like Kenneth "Tuk" Jacobson, the Bald Eagle has made a dramatic comeback.

"Tuk" shown at right with a Bald Eagle



What's Happening in our Chapter? By Your Editor, George Wall

At the October board meeting, the management of the Together Green Planning Grant was discussed. Karen LaFrance will be managing this grant and will spend endless hours on the project. Since Together Green doesn't fund for management costs, it was voted to give her \$1100 over the next 11 months to help defray her time and costs.

Friends membership was a topic that needs attention. We should do more to increase our "Friends" membership. A separate article on page 3 in this issue addresses this important topic.

The picnic is set for November 15th. See separate article on page 5. As of October 19th, 40 people have signed up.

We need more people to sign up for the "Gifts From Nature" event scheduled for December 11-12, 2009. See next page.

There was a very good turn out (over 40) for Dr. Rosenthal's presentation at the General Membership meeting.

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2009 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.

Sunday, November 8, 2009 Arlington Ponds IBA Area

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

This wildlife area has several ponds totaling approximately 10 acres, an extensive stand of salt cedar, and about 4 miles of river channel including running water, cattails and other emergent vegetation, sand and gravel bars and riparian trees such as cottonwood, willow and salt cedar.

Difficulty: 1

Meet at the Wildlife World Zoo (16501 W. Northern Ave.) in the paved parking lot by the aquarium at 6 a.m.

Sunday, November 15, 20 Robbins Butte Birding & Annual Picnic

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

See write up on page 5.

Wednesday, November 18, 2009 Tres Rios Wetlands Leader: Eleanor Campbell 623-977-7639

Leader. Eleanor Campbell 023-977-7039

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 Blackbellied 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.



The trip committee met on October 23, 2009. Trips were planned for January through April, 2010. See the December Newsletter.

SATURDAY FAMILY BIRD WALKS By Rich Schooler

The Sonoran Audubon Society Saturday Family Bird Walks started last month. The bird walks will be held the second Saturday of each month continuing through April at the Estrella Mountain Park located at Bullard Avenue and Vineyard Road. The bird walk will begin at 8 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.

For further information contact Rich Schooler at 623-930-8904.

SUNDAY FAMILY BIRD WALKS By Bob McCormick

The Sonoran Audubon Society also sponsors a Sunday bird walk. These take place the fourth Sunday of each month also at Estrella Mountain Park and start at 8 a.m.

The meeting place for this walk is at the Navy picnic grounds which are further down the road from the Visitors Center.

For further information contact Bob McCormick at 602-237-3951, mcbobaz@aol.com or Andrée Tarby 480-948-1074 atarby@cox.net

Gifts From Nature

With over 600 members in our chapter, you would think we could get more volunteers and attendance at our meetings and events. This is very disappointing to me and our board.

One of these events is "Gifts of Nature" to be held Friday-Saturday, December 11-12 at the Cattle Creek Arts Compound, 6105 N. Cattle Track Road in Scottsdale, AZ. Times are Friday from 4-10 p.m. (This is VIP night) and Saturday from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. (open to the public).

Since we are hosting this event for Audubon Arizona, we need 12-15 people for both days to fill the work roster. So far, it is only half filled. Call or email me—George Wall 623-875-7057 gwall5@cox.net. HELP!

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Friends of the Sonoran Audubon	Society
By Chuck Kangas and George Wall	

What is a "Friend" of the Sonoran Audubon Society?

A "Friend" of the Sonoran Audubon Society provides financial support for the chapter and its activities. As a "Friend", you have all the privileges of a full member in our chapter and all monies received goes into our chapter and you do not have to be a member of the National Audubon Society to be a chapter member.

If you are a National Audubon Society member, you are automatically a member of our chapter, but only a small portion of your dues comes back to our chapter, but not the full amount like a "Friend". However, you do get the National Audubon Society magazine which you do not get as a "Friend".

The long and short of it is, we get more money into our chapter if you are a "Friend". Of course, several of you are a National Audubon Society member and also a "Friend" which is great.

If you have previously been a "Friend" and don't know if you are still a "Friend" (a 'Friend's" membership lasts one year), contact either Charles Kangas at 623-931-6677, chuckkan@mindspring.com or George Wall at 623-875-7057, gwall5@cox.net and we'll tell you what your status is.

Forms for a "Friend's" membership are on our website at www.sonoranaudubon.org. If you don't have access to the internet, contact one of us and we'll send you the form via regular mail or you can use the form shown below.

FRIEN	TO
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Total

() I would like to become a Friend of the Sonoran tribute at four levels (Please indicate your choice of level):	Audubon Society or continue to be a friend. Friends can con-
() Verdin (Adult) \$20.00 to \$49.99 per year	

() Cactus Wren \$50.00 to \$99.00 per year

() Burrowing Owl (Seniors) \$15.00 to \$49.99 per year

() Gilded Flicker \$100.00 or more per year

All friends' contributions are fully tax-deductible

Receiving Gambel's Tales

Gambel's Tales is the newsletter of the chapter, published monthly from September through May. The newsletter is available via the Internet at www.sonoranaudubon.org and we encourage chapter members and friends to use this service. There are some who don't have internet service or just can't read the newsletter in its form. If this is the case, you may want to receive the Sonoran Audubon Society Newsletter via regular mail. The cost for mailing the newsletter is \$10.00 per year.

() Yes, I would like to receive the newsletter via regular mail. My \$10.00 is enclosed	
amount enclosed for a Friend \$	

Total Enclosed \$

Send to Sonoran Audubon Society, P.O. Box 8068, Glendale, AZ 85312-8068

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Black-throated Sparrows: Forty Million are Missing By Bettina Bickel

The handsomely marked black-throated sparrow is considered to be better adapted to our desert ecosystems than any other seed eating bird in North America, according to the National Audubon Society. They are abundant, too, with an estimated population of 20 million. However, that is down from a population of about 60 million 40 years ago. This 63% drop in population has earned our desert sparrow the number 12 spot on National Audubon's list of common birds in decline.

Birders are likely to encounter flocks of black-throated sparrows in our local desert parks, where they are often seen singing from the top of a low shrub. Black-throated sparrows live in open habitats including deserts and semi-desert grasslands. Their year-round range includes southern Arizona, southwestern New Mexico, and south into Mexico. Their summer range extends north into Utah and Nevada.

Like other sparrows, black-throated sparrows are primarily ground foragers that feed on seeds and other plant material. During breeding season, the diet is primarily insects and their larva, which can be fed to the nestlings.

Since black-throated sparrows do not adapt well to suburban settings, loss of natural desert to urban sprawl is a major reason for population decline in our area. Landscaping with native plants can help, while growth management and preservation of open space are vital to provide habitat for this and other native desert species.

National Audubon also considers altered fire regimes to be a major cause of declining habitat quality. Invasive species such as cheatgrass and buffelgrass have promoted destructive fire regimes that native species are not adapted to.

Climate change is also on ongoing threat to black-throated sparrows, other species, and us! We currently have an opportunity to address global climate change at the federal level, as the Senate is considering legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This legislation also includes a component to protect ecosystems and natural resources from the effects of climate change. Please let your senators know you value healthy ecosystems and support legislation to stop climate change.

Twenty million is a lot of black-throated sparrows, but the precipitous decline of our desert sparrow is a warning about the changes in our environment and a call to action for protecting our desert ecosystems.



Black-throated Sparrow—Photo by George Wall

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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. We will furnish the hamburgers, hot dogs and all the condiments for them. Just show up and bring a small salad, casserole, veggie or desert of your choice. There will also be a free raffle and one of the items is a telescope originally purchased for \$175. It was probably used only once or twice.

At the same time, for those who want to, there will be a bird walk. The bird walk will start at 8 a.m. at the Robbins Butte picnic area. The walk is about 2 miles round trip and it will take us maybe 2 hours to walk the trail. The difficulty is a 1.

The picnic will start at around 11 a.m. and go until 1-2 p.m.

Robbins Butte Wildlife Area (RBWA) is administered by the Arizona Game & Fish Department. We've had trips here twice before and always had a good time. I was out there to check out things on October 14, 2009, and things looked good. There are 4 large picnic tables, a serving table, Grill, and several other places to sit. However, if you have those nice folding chairs, it would be a good idea to bring them just in case the tables are full. There are porta potties close by.

I was sitting at one of the tables for about 30 minutes and I saw a Cooper's Hawk, Eurasian Collared Dove, Abert's Towhee, Black Phoebe, Loggerhead Shrike, Gila Woodpecker, Mourning Dove and House Sparrows and I didn't move from the table.

Phil Smith, who works for Arizona Game and Fish and who manages Robbins Butte, has done an amazing job in the last five years getting the place fixed up to where it is now. A lot of work still needs to be done and maybe we can help out. He has recently put in a marsh area to attract marsh birds. He has also planted numerous cottonwoods around the main pond.

RBWA is the center of the annual Gila River Christmas Bird Count, and over 115 species of winter-resident birds have been observed in the



Picnic Area



Phil Smith Photos by George Wall

vicinity. In addition, many raptors winter in and near RBWA, including the White-tailed Kite (Elanus leucurus). The summer avian community has not been counted, but species numbers probably exceed those of winter.

Sign up at the meetings or let me know.

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ARIZONA (& VICINITY) CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT SCHEDULE [2009-2010]

The National Audubon Society has conducted Christmas bird counts since 1900. Volunteers from across North America and beyond take to the field during one calendar day between December 14 and January 5 to record every bird species and individual bird encountered within a designated 15-mile diameter circle. These records now comprise an extensive ornithological database that enables monitoring of winter bird populations and the overall health of the environment.

Participants are typically assigned to teams based on their bird identification skill level and endurance. Many counts hold a compilation dinner at the end of the day where results are tabulated and stories shared. A \$5.00 participation fee defrays a portion of the cost of tabulating and publishing the overall count results. Help is needed on most of these counts, so find one that interests you and contact the compiler for more information.

Date Da		Compiler	Phone	<u>E-Mail</u>
12/14 Mo	Salt-Verde Rivers	Kurt Radamaker	480-837-2446	kurtrad@mexicobirding.com
12/18 Fr	Buenos Aires NWR	Bonnie Swarbrick	520-823-4251 x108	bonnie_swarbrick@fws.gov
12/18 Fr	Prescott	Carl Tomoff	928-778-2626	tomoff@northlink.com
12/18 Fr	Saint David	Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/19 Sa	Ajo-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Curt McCasland	520-387-4992	curtis_mccasland@fws.gov
12/19 Sa		Mary Lou Cole	520-578-0114	birdingnana@msn.com
12/19 Sa	Martinez Lake-Yuma	Henry Detwiler	928-210-6474	henrydetwiler@earthlink.net
12/19 Sa	Mormon Lake	Elaine Morrall	928-526-1022	elaimorr@npgcable.com
12/19 Sa	Nogales	Michael Bissontz	520-577-8778	seetrogon@comcast.net
12/19 Sa	Pipe Spring Natl. Monument	Andrea Bornemeier	928-643-7105	adrea_bornemeier@nps.gov
12/19 Sa	Ramsey Canyon	Ted Mouras	520-803-0221	tedmouras@mindspring.com
12/19 Sa	Santa Catalina Mountains	Bob Bates	520-296-5629	batesd@cox.net
12/20 Su	Chino Valley	Russell Duerksen	928-636-4916	russell.duerksen@azbar.org
12/20 Su		Vanessa Montgomery	623-465-0012	hassayampacbc@hotmail.com
12/20 Su		Betsy Feinberg	928-203-0676 x11	azbirder@gmail.com
12/20 Su	Tucson Valley	Larry Liese	520-743-3520	larryliese@prodigy.net
12/21 Mo		Tom Wood	520-432-1388	tom@sabo.org
12/21 Mo	Phoenix-Tres Rios	David Powell	602-441-5508	vireo@vireos.com
12/26 Sa	Flagstaff-Mount Elden	Terry Blows	928-774-8028	terence.blows@nau.edu
12/26 Sa	Superior	Cynthia Donald	480-283-4515	planres@earthlink.net
12/27 Su	C	Abbie Zeltzer	520-604-6320	amindajar@gmail.com
12/28 Mo	Gila River	Troy Corman	602-482-6187	aplomado@cox.net
12/28 Mo	Green Valley-Madera Canyon	Michael Marsden	520-269-6240	birdanza@cox.net
12/29 Tu		DeeDee DeLorenzo	928-758-2707	poncho@citlink.net
12/30 We		Kathleen Blair	928-667-4144	kathleen_blair@fws.gov
12/30 We		Walter Thurber	480-483-6450	wathurber@cox.net
1/2 Sa	**	Robert Weissler	520-803-0794	weissler@aves.org
1/2 Sa	Dudleyville	Doug Jenness	520-909-1529	d_jenness@hotmail.com
1/2 Sa	Portal	Jackie Lewis	520-558-2287	winjac12@vtc.net
1/2 Sa	Sedona	Dottie Hook	928-204-1894	dottiehook1@aol.com
1/2 Sa	Sierra Pinta-Cabeza Prieta NWR	Curt McCasland	520-387-4992	curtis_mccasland@fws.gov
1/3 Su	\mathcal{E}	Rich Hoyer	520-325-5310	birdernaturalist@me.com
1/3 Su	±	Anita MacFarlane	928-282-4063	ajmac@macfarlanes.us
1/5 Tu	Glen Canyon	John Spence	928-608-6267	john_spence@nps.gov
Unknown	Payson	Dave Hallock	303-258-3672	eldoradh@rmi.net
Unknown	Timber Mesa	Unknown		
	arby Counts			
12/19 Sa	Puerto Penasco, Sonora, MX	Steve Ganley	480-830-5538	sganley@cox.net
Unknown	Peloncillo Mountains, NM	Unknown		

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Himalayan Snowcock By Jerry Theis

I normally don't write about introduced bird species, but one species is special to me and deserves print. In July of 1995, I joined Bill Gibson of Elko Guide Services, Yerington, Nevada in a search for the then newly-ABA countable Himalayan Snowcock, a bird of Asian origin. We met in Elko and Bill took the two of us to his remote log house at the base of the Ruby Mountains in northeastern Nevada. Bill knew that many ABA-area listers would want to see the Snowcock; therefore, he offered four-day horseback trips into the Ruby Mountains, where the largest population of the introduced birds existed.

The Snowcock, a large game bird (the size of the Greater Sage-Grouse), is a ground-dwelling bird that eats mostly plant material. It is grayish-brown with tan streaking above. It has a whitish face, outlined with chestnut stripes. It is a stocky bird with thick, strong legs. The Snowcock is a wary, secretive bird, made more wary due to a yearly hunting season.

After a several-hour horseback ride into the mountains, we were met with an impassable snow bank. After tethering the horses, we scaled the steep slopes on foot until we reached the summit. We slowly peeked over the edge and spotted a covey of the desired bird, including chicks, crossing a snowfield. They immediately flushed, flying swiftly out of sight. Fortunately, we saw several other individuals close by during the next hour. I know several birders who attempted to view the Snowcock by helicopter, which was expensive and usually unsuccessful. Going with Bill Gibson was a great experience, from sleeping in his rustic loft to eating grilled Bighorn Sheep rump roast! However, Bill's most unique quality was his habit of tasting Snowcock droppings as we trailed them, determining how close we were to them by the freshness of the "flavor."

In addition to the Himalayan Snowcock, we saw Black Rosy-finches, mountain goats, mule deer and several Great Basin Rattlesnakes. The entire experience was most gratifying.



Photo taken from www.wikipedia.org, a free website of information and pictures

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EVENTS IN AND AROUND THE VALLEY

Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center

Open House on Saturday and Sunday, November 21-22, 2009 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free admission and parking.

See Arizona's wildlife up close. Spend a day learning amazing facts and natural history about animals you may encounter in the wild. There will be live wildlife education presentations, a self guided tour for you to enjoy the center at your pace and much more.

Where: Adobe Mountain Wildlife Center, 2800 W. Pinnacle Peak Road (West side of I-17).

Directions: Take I-17 to Pinnacle Peak (exit 217). Westside of I-17. Enter Adobe Mountain Juvenile Detention Center (1st right from I-17 Hwy) and proceed to event parking.

Food and beverages will be available for purchase.

Birders' Anonymous

Birders' Anonymous, a group of bird-watchers, has their next meeting on Friday, November 20, 2009, starting at 10 a.m. at the Church of the Palms on the corner of Boswell and 103rd Ave. in Sun City.

The field trip for the month will be on Thursday, November 12, 2009, to Rio Salado. Leave Bell Recreation Center parking lot at 7 a.m.

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

Rio Salado Audubon Center

Beginning Birding with Kathe Anderson. Saturday, November 7, 2009, 8–11 a.m. Sunday, November 29, 2009, 8-11 a.m. Sign up or request more info by emailing riosalado@audubon.org.

For other events, see http://Audubon.org

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.

Hassayampa River Preserve

Nature Walk Saturday, November 28, 2009, 8:30-10 a.m. a.m.

Birding 101, Sunday, November 22, 2009, 8-10 a.m.

Bird Banding: Saturdays, November 7th and 21st 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. 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

Saturday, November 7, 2009, Patagonia and San Rafael Valley Grasslands. Leader: David Pearson. Contact Laurie Nessel, 480-968-5614 or laurienessel@gmail.com for reservations.

Monday, November 16, 2009, Globe/Pinal Mountain. Leader: Kathe Anderson, 480-951-4890 or kathe.coot@cox.net for reservations.

See all of their trips at www.maricopaaudubon.org

Arizona Field Ornithologists (AZFO)

Have you checked out the AZFO web site yet? If not, you might want to do so. This is a fantastic web site with the latest bird sightings of interest, photos and events. The website is at www.azfo.org.

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.



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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



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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.

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: November 4, 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

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